

Serials

SERIALS
DIVISION



Korean FM (R)
Responds
Warmly, Dec. 29,
to N. Korea's
Apology over
Last September's
Submarine
Incident. The
North's Apology
Ended Tension in
the Peninsula
Page 15

IRAN NEWS

Guatemala's
URNG
Commanders
Rosal (L) and
Moran (C)
Arrive in
Guatemala City
Dec. 28, to Sign
Peace Treaty
Ending 36 Years
of Rebellion
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VOL. III, No. 640 TEHRAN Price 200 Rials

Iran, Turkmenistan, Turkey Ink MoU on Export of Natural Gas

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iran, Turkmenistan and Turkey have Saturday night signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to meet Ankara's gas needs and transfer of Iranian and Turkmen natural gas to Europe via Turkey.

The agreement was inked by Iran's oil minister, Gholamreza Aqazadeh, Turkish minister of energy and natural resources, Recai Kutay, and Turkmen deputy prime minister, Batyr Sardzhayev, at the end of their tripartite meeting.

In an interview at the end of the meeting, Aqazadeh termed the agreement as a successful example of cooperation between the three countries.

The oil minister also described the tripartite MoU as very important from political, security and economic points of view.

Iran's gas pipeline will be officially linked to that of Turkey at the Iran-Turkey joint border in the next Iranian month of Farvardin (March 21-April 20) in the presence of officials from both countries.

Meanwhile, Kutay told reporters that Ankara is willing to upgrade ties with Tehran to the highest level.

Positive steps will be taken by Tehran and Ankara in political, economic and cultural fields following this agreement, he concluded.

Office of Traffic Control

Violations in CROSSWALKS will be recorded.

Traffic Surveillance Headquarters

CONDOLENCES

Mr. Gholamreza Khodayar
News of the tragic death of your loved one has caused profound distress among your colleagues at IRAN NEWS. We wish to extend our heartfelt condolences to you and the other members of the bereaved family, and pray that the soul of your loved one may rest in Divine peace.

Japanese PM Hails Hostage Releases in Peru as Start of Dialogue

TEKYO, JAPAN (AFP) - Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto yesterday welcomed the release of 20 more hostages in Lima as "the start of dialogue" and stressed again Tokyo's opposition to using force to end the standoff.

Hashimoto also said he would act on a letter of appeal he received from Japanese businessmen still held in the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima urging the government to step up efforts for the early release of the hostages.

"Saturday's release means that dialogue has started," Hashimoto told reporters.

The approach taken by President (Alberto) Fujimori has produced result, leading to a direct dialogue between the Peruvian government and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) rebels."

The rebels, who seized the compound on December 17, released 20 more people on Saturday, reducing the number of hostages they are still holding to 83.

Moments after the release, government negotiator Domingo Palermo, who met directly with the MRTA for the first time in the compound said "progress has been made" to end the standoff.

Hashimoto also said an appeal received from Japanese businessmen held captive "showed a cool-headed approach among hostages

as well as the severe state they are in."

"I will write to President Fujimori as soon as possible, based on what I read in the letter," he added.

The letter, written in Japanese and Spanish and delivered by freed Japanese hostages on Saturday, was signed by "all hostages belonging to Japanese firms operating in Peru," and addressed to Hashimoto and all Japanese citizens, according to a copy shown by Japan Broadcasting Corp. (NHK).

It read: "We are being watched by armed soldiers for 24 hours a day. If this state of confinement is protracted, it will be extremely difficult for us to maintain physical and mental balance."

"We are from the private sector, and therefore should be excluded from negotiations between the Peruvian government and the rebel group," it added, urging Tokyo to press for their release.

NHK said it was unknown whether the letter was written spontaneously by the hostages or under the orders of the rebels.

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NOWBAKH Majlis Considers Problems of State-Owned Companies

IRAN NEWS PARLIAMENTARY DESK
TEHRAN - A female lawmaker yesterday asked the government to revise its policy related to companies belonging to the public sector.

Monireh Nowbakh in a pre-agenda speech in the opening session of the Majlis said that a review of the policy related to the state-owned companies is needed at a time when debate on the annual budget for the 1376 Iranian year (starting on March 21, 1997) is continuing in the Legislature.

Representative of the Tehran Constituency, Nowbakh said that there are 1,150 government-owned companies in Iran with total assets three times more than the general budget of the country.

"Interestingly enough, just 395 of the 1,150 companies pay taxes," she told the Majlis session presided over by Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri.

The present condition of the

See Page 13



BY PARISA ALINIA
DUSHANBE, TAJIKISTAN - Iran's First Vice President Dr. Hassan Habibi yesterday met with Tajik Prime Minister Yahya Azimov shortly after arriving at the Tajik capital on a three-day state visit.

Habibi is here at the head of a high-level economic delegation and was greeted at the Dushanbe Airport by Tajik prime minister and a number of other senior Tajik officials.

Azimov thanked Dr. Habibi for accepting his invitation, and said: "Due to the cultural, historical and lingual commonalities between the two countries, the Muslim people of Tajikistan are very keen to promote their political, economic, cultural and trade relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran."

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Habibi Holds Talks with Tajik Premier Azimov

Terming Ashkhabad-Saraks railway, "a short and economical way" for Tajikistan's trade with other regional countries, the Tajik premier noted: "My country is eager to study the ways of further exploiting this rail link with the visiting Iranian delegation."

He also called for establishment of a trade center for exhibition of Iran's industrial goods in Dushanbe.

Dr. Habibi said: "The two countries' officials have already started their talks exploring ways of expanding bilateral ties and finalizing the agreements reached between Iran and Tajikistan."

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Majlis Rejects Probe into Mobile Phones

BY MEHRDAD SERJOOIE
TEHRAN - Mehdi Reza Darvishzadeh, representative from Dezful, Khuzestan Province, yesterday proposed that an investigation be conducted into the sums collected last year for mobile telephones and on the reasons why Iran's Telecommunications Com-

pany (ITC) has not signed contracts with domestic companies to manufacture the mobile handsets.

His proposal was put to vote in the Majlis (Parliament) and was rejected by 89 votes against 64 in favor and 34 abstentions.

Last year, applicants deposited 6,000,000 rials each with ITC for purchase of mobile telephones which were to be delivered within 18 months.

But last summer, the Majlis Economy, Finance, and Plan and Budget Commission declared mobile telephones "commercial commodities" and refused to allow the imports of mobile handsets.

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Israel to Control Hebron Shrine

JERUSALEM (Dispatches) - Rejecting Palestinian demands for shared control, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday that Israel alone will maintain security at a disputed religious shrine in the heart of Hebron.

Netanyahu also said Israelis would remain in the West Bank city "forever," drawing criticism from Palestinian negotiator Hassan Asfour who said such a declaration "negates the spirit of peace."

Two fire bombs were hurled at a Jewish residence in the city where tensions remain high between about 500 Jewish settlers and 130,000 Palestinians. There was no damage or injury.

Palestinian and Israeli negotiators planned to meet last night to continue work on a much-delayed plan to hand over 80 percent of the West Bank town to Palestinian po-

Israeli to Withdraw One Week After Hebron Accord

JERICHO, WEST BANK - Israeli troops will withdraw from most of

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Arafat (L) with Mubarak



"Star Wars" Coming to Museum

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The Continuing Peruvian Saga

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Morning Glory Wins Sydney to Hobart

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IRAN NEWS

NEWS

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EDITORIAL

Iran's Private, Public Sectors Ready for Investment in Tajikistan

A high-level Iranian delegation headed by First Vice President Hassan Habibi went to neighboring Tajikistan yesterday. The delegation, made up of senior officials of the administration of President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, will confer with officials of the government of President Imomali Rakhmanov in Dushanbe.

Tajikistan and all other former republics of the Soviet Union in Central Asia and the Caucasus region have had close historical, cultural and religious association with Iran for the last several centuries, but during the seven decades of Russian Communism, Iran's ties with these republics remained at a low level.

Iran renewed its relations with these republics after the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, and Tajikistan now enjoys a special status among other republics because of its ethnic links with the Islamic Republic.

Persian language links Iran and Tajikistan with a strong bond and both countries are ready and willing to join hands in all areas of bilateral cooperation.

Unfortunately, Tajikistan has remained a trouble spot since its independence in 1991. The trouble started in 1992 when the pro-Islamic government was ousted by Rakhmanov's neo-Communists.

As a result, a basic element for reconstruction, i.e. peace coupled with stability, has been missing in Tajikistan during the last four years.

No doubt the civil war was imposed on the people of Tajikistan. At the same time Iran, Russia and the United Nations did all that was possible to silence the guns in the poorest republic of the Central Asia.

Because of the mediating efforts of Iran, Russia and the United Nations several documents have been signed over the past two years of negotiations. The lastest was signed last week in Moscow. The Moscow negotiations are supposed to culminate in a final agreement in Tehran within the next two months.

Iran's sincere efforts were aimed at bringing peace and stability to Tajikistan, because Tehran is quite ready to join hands with its neighbors for a comprehensive reconstruction of that country.

Both the private and public sectors of the Islamic Republic are ready to invest in construction of the basic infrastructure facilities in Tajikistan preparing it for further development.

What Tajiks need is to stick to commitments they have made in Moscow and follow it through by putting the final seal on the papers in Tehran.

A popular people's government along with stability will pave the way for the Iranian private and public sectors to cooperate with their neighbors in the reconstruction of Tajikistan and improve the lot of destitute Tajiks.

The current visit of the Iranian delegation could be a landmark in the way of unlimited Dushanbe-Tehran cooperation.

Velayati, Nouri to Meet Today



VELAYATI



NOURI

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK
TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati will receive Seyed Abdullah Nouri, Tajik opposition leader at the Foreign Ministry's Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS) to review the end of hostilities in Tajikistan and the recent agreements reached in Moscow.

Imomali Rakhmanov, president of Tajikistan Republic and Seyed Abdullah Nouri met on December 19 in Moscow and signed the final agreement for establishment of cease-fire and peace in Tajikistan.

In this agreement the two sides agreed to form a national compromise commission to bring back peace and stability into the country.

The parties have further agreed to continue the negotiations in Tehran on January 5.

Since 1992 - one year after the independence of Tajikistan - difference arose between the government forces and the opposition group who were seeking a share in the government.

So far the two sides have held five official rounds of talks in Islamabad, Ashkhabad, Tehran and Moscow and the peace talks in Tehran in 1994 led to a 6-month cease-fire.

In these negotiations, the UN peace envoy, Iran and Russia have had an active role in bringing the warring parties to the negotiation table.

Demirel Relations with Importance

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Broadening of Iran-Turkish relations is of special significance in terms of achieving peace, stability and overall welfare in the region, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel said in Ankara on Saturday.

Demirel outlined some of the most important events of 1996 while speaking at a press conference.

The Turkish president assessed the outcome of President Hojjatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's visit to Turkey as positive noting that close relations between Iran and Turkey would affect regional developments positively.

Demirel stressed that consultations and permanent exchange of views between the officials of Iran and Turkey will continue at various levels.

He emphasized that he and his Iranian counterpart adopted a realistic approach in their discussions of regional developments and bilateral relations.

The Turkish president stated that Rafsanjani and he took steps for expansion of bilateral trade ties and some accords were con-

sidered in that respect. However, he indicated that promotion of trade relations was not against other countries.

Demirel also elaborated on some of the agenda brought up during the talks which included promotion of bilateral cooperation in the areas of campaign against terrorism and maintenance and preservation of border security, however, the issues related to coop-



Suleyman Demirel

eration between the two countries on defense industries were not touched on during the visit.

Majlis Candidates to Register Names Tomorrow

IRAN NEWS PARLIAMENTARY DESK
TEHRAN - Intermediary candidates for by-election in the Majlis will register their names as of tomorrow.

Habibi in response, welcomed the two countries' promotion of relations and trade exchanges, saying that arrangements have been made for a meeting in Tehran of the two countries' joint economic commission.

Habibi visited Armenia at the head of high-level political-economic delegation Dec. 25-28.

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Armenian President, Premier to Visit Iran Soon



TER-PETROSSIAN

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK
YEREVAN, ARMENIA - The Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrossian on Saturday hailed the "positive" outcome of the state visit of Iran's First Vice President Dr. Hassan Habibi to Armenia.

"The volume of the accords reached between the two nations was beyond expectation of Armenia," he said in his second round of talks with Habibi.

Referring to the agreements signed between Iran and Armenia in political, economic and cultural affairs, Petrossian said Yerevan was at the beginning of expansion of relations with Tehran.

Expressing his country's desire

relations as "fruitful" and in the interest of the two nations.

The Armenian president said that he and the Armenian premier will soon pay a visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran to pursue the bilateral agreements in order to pave the way for further expansion of relations.

Habibi in response, welcomed the two countries' promotion of relations and trade exchanges, saying that arrangements have been made for a meeting in Tehran of the two countries' joint economic commission.

Habibi visited Armenia at the head of high-level political-economic delegation Dec. 25-28.

6,000 Titles of Books Published in Iran This Year



MIRSALEM

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK
TEHRAN - Some 5,598 titles of books have been published during the first nine months of this year, said the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mostafa Mirsalim here yesterday.

The minister, speaking at a press conference, said that some 5,579 titles of books had been published last year.

The number of books publish-

ed for the first time and those reprinted this year stood at 4,081 and 4,429 respectively, IRNA reported.

He added that the number of publishers active outside Tehran showed a remarkable increase this year compared to the previous years.

Some 69 percent of total active publishers are now in Tehran while they were 82 percent last year, he said.

The minister said that 22 percent of the total publishers are in Qom, five percent in Mashhad, two percent in Tabriz and two percent in Isfahan.

According to IRNA, he pointed out that the average copies of each book published in Iran was 5,900, while they were 4,800 last year.

Mirsalim said that books on religious matters, children and young adults and on Persian language and literature were among the best selling books offered at bookshops this year.

Majlis Association of Engineers Formed

IRAN NEWS PARLIAMENTARY DESK

TEHRAN - The Majlis Association of Engineers was established following declaration of its objectives and approval of the founding board, a report from the Majlis Head Office of Cultural Affairs and Public Relations said here yesterday.

Some of the aims of the Association are as follows:

1. To review and undertake professional analysis of those plans and bills related to the country's development and engineering affairs.

2. To support the codification of necessary policies which aim at the qualitative enhancement of Iran's technical and engineering affairs in the form of rules and directives issued by the concerned authorities.

3. To crystallize the place and position of engineers and the country's engineering code as per executive technical and engineering affairs and to determine the role of experts in planning, designing, and following up legal af-

fairs in the country's judicial system.

4. To accelerate the codification and implementation of the standardization codes of technical and engineering activities.

5. To provide proper grounds to export the country's technical and engineering services abroad, taken their development and growth in Iran into consideration.

6. To draw up policies for experts training and education for the country's technical and development affairs, i.e. the work force ranging from simple worker to specialized engineers, as well as defining job classification for these professions.

The report went on to add that the Association elected Dr. Seyed Gholam Reza Shirazian, Eng. Mohsen Yahyavi, Eng. Seyed Hossein Hashemi, Eng. Bahar udin Adab, Eng. Yadullah Tahernejad, Eng. Balal Samandari, and Eng. Marzieh Seddiqi as members of its presid-



GUEST IN TOWN

Kyodo Bureau Chief Hasegawa Impressed by Iran's Culture

Japan's leading and prestigious news agency, Kyodo News has been covering the Iranian developments from Tehran for ages and observers in Iran believe that its coverage mostly based on the facts and it is unbiased.

At present Kyodo Bureau Chief is a young journalist, Kenji Hasegawa who arrived here in Oct. 1995 to replace another active Japanese journalist, Tomohiro Gima.

It was his second visit as Hasegawa was here in 1983 when he was a college student with Farsi language as his major.

"While studying Persian language a serious interest had grown up in my mind to see Iran, its culture, civilization and the people and I decided to visit Iran," Hasegawa told IRAN NEWS.

"I realized that the Iranians are kind and enjoy great hospitality," Hasegawa, 34, responded to a question.

"I still remember my visit to Iranian historical cities of Shiraz, Isfahan and Tehran in 1985 and saw there signs of great civilization of this country," Hasegawa recalled.



HASEGAWA

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President Meets Turkish, Turkmen Ministers

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - President Hashemi Rafsanjani received Turkish energy and resources minister, Mr. Kutan, Turkmen Vice President Sardjayed, and Nazjanov, the oil minister yesterday afternoon. The meeting was also attended by Oil Minister Aqazadeh.

At the meeting the Turkish minister stressed his government's resolve for cooperation to build the pipeline for conveying gas from Turkmenistan and Iran to world markets via Turkey.

He said: "The Turkish government shall carry out this project firmly on the basis of its national interests and without attention to the foreign pressures."

He said: "The oil ministers and officials of the three countries without any difference in views and with complete goodwill are ready to execute the project well."

The oil minister of Turkmenistan appreciated the IRI's goodwill and spirit of cooperation and said: "The three countries are ready for execution of the project for conveying gas from Turkmenistan and Iran to Europe and world markets via Turkey."

President Hashemi Rafsanjani



said: "Economic considerations, consumption requirements and common national interests of the three countries necessitate their cooperation to implement the project for conveying gas as quickly as possible."

Referring to the foreign pressure to prevent the project, Rafsanjani said: "The U.S. is impudently calling on Turkey to relinquish the great advantages of consumption of gas and the many benefits of the gas pipeline's crossing that country."

It is also calling on Turkmenistan to relinquish export of

PRAYER TIMES

Noon (Zohr) 12:07
Evening (Maghreb) 17:23
Tomorrow's Dawn (Fajr) 05:35
Tomorrow's Sunrise 07:14

gas which is the most important source of exchange for the country or to choose a more expensive and insecure route than the suitable Iranian one."

The President stressed: "Iran, Turkey and Turkmenistan can, with their good potentials and their capacity, carry out the project without any need for the world's money markets. We should not permit the U.S. to sacrifice the interests of various countries to its monopolistic policies."

The President declared the

Iran Ready to Continue Talks for Release of PoWs

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - Following the recent visit of an Iraqi delegation to Tehran, the Iranian commission in charge of prisoners of war (PoWs) voiced its readiness to continue talks for releasing PoWs, the Persian daily Iran quoted a senior official as saying.

Head of the commission Brigadier General Abdullah Najafi in an interview with the daily, expressed hope that Iraqi officials

IRI's readiness for execution of the project and said: "Iran shall not spare any cooperation for the implementation of this important project as quickly as possible. And it is firmly determined."

Mr. Hashemi Rafsanjani asked for his warm and friendly greetings to be conveyed to the president and the prime minister of Turkey and the president of Turkmenistan.

He expressed hope that with the diligence and efforts of officials of the three countries the project would be carried out.

The President declared the

Iran Ready to Continue

Talks for Release of PoWs

would prepare grounds for returning of the Iranian PoWs to Iran.

He stressed that Iran is trying hard to implement the 3rd Article of the U.N. Security Council Resolution 598 on the PoWs.

Najafi while expressing hope that the issue of PoWs would be settled soon said that according to the latest reports the behavior of Iraqi forces toward Iranian captives has improved, IRNA reported.

According to the Third Geneva Convention, prisoners of war should have been released immediately after cessation of the war. But the two sides failed to convince each other in this regard," said the daily quoted Ali Khoram, adviser to the foreign minister.

Yemeni Ambassador Meets Majlis Vice-Speaker

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

TEHRAN - The first vice-speaker of the Majlis, Hassan Rowhani in a meeting with Yemeni ambassador to Tehran, Abdullah Mohammad al-Razi here yesterday said the enemies of Islam are trying to despoil the regional wealth by dividing Islamic states.

Rowhani called for further promotion of Tehran-Sana relations and stressed that Iran's foreign policy is based on cooperation and friendship with regional states.

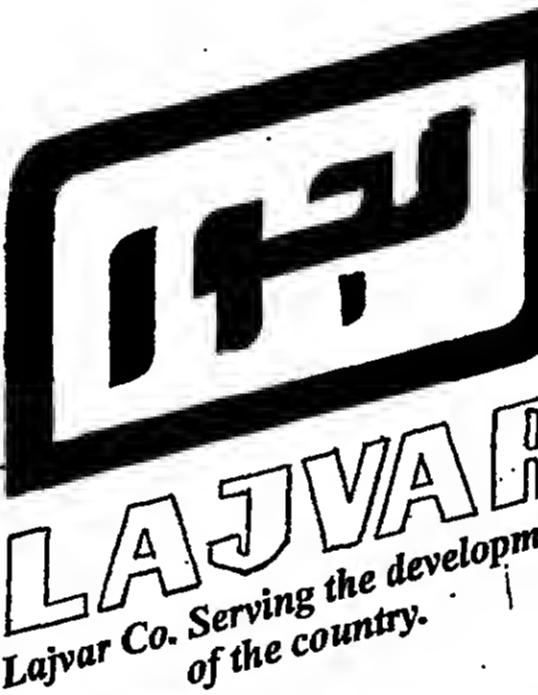
The Yemeni ambassador urged all regional countries to solve their disputes through negotiations and peaceful means. IRNA reported.

Kazakh Bishop Hailes Iran's Respect for Religious Minorities

IRAN NEWS POLITICAL DESK

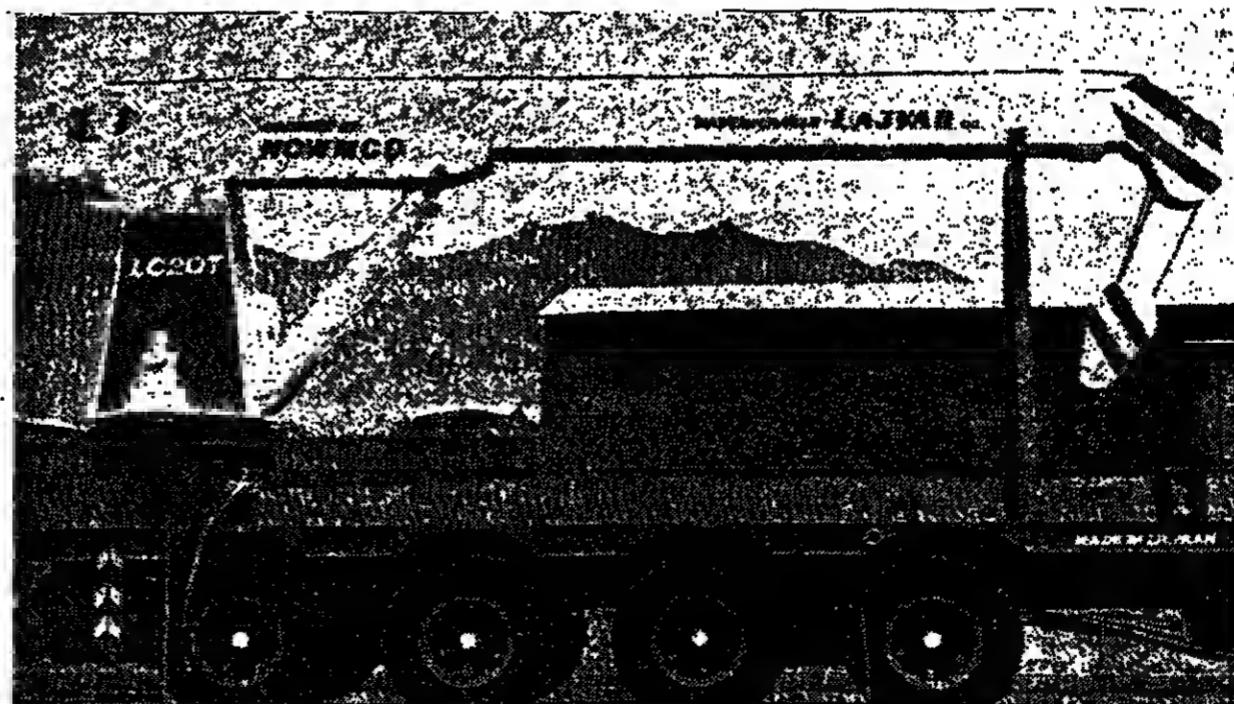
TEHRAN - Bishop Alekse, the highest Christian authority in Kazakhstan, Saturday in Almaty hailed Iran's respect for religious minorities and the political, social and religious freedom the Iranian authorities are giving them.

According to IRNA the bishop, in his meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Almaty Hassan Qashqavi, welcomed talks between Iranian ulama and Christian clergy as a suitable means for bringing closer Divine religions.



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Largest Industrial Effluent Treatment Plant Goes On Stream in Saveh

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK
TEHRAN - The largest industrial effluent treatment plant was launched at Kaveh Industrial Township in Saveh yesterday.

Addressing a ceremony marking the event, Head of Mostazafan and Janbazan Foundation (MJF) Mohsen Rafiqdoust said the nation's overall development and increase of productivity is one of our main slogans in MJF so that we can meet the domestic demands and play a valuable role in international trade.

However, he warned executives to consider safeguarding the purity of the living environment when building industrial plants.

"Construction of the effluent treatment plant in Kaveh Industrial Township is one of the foundation's main projects in which 20 billion rials has been invested so far," said Rafiqdoust.

Kaveh Industrial Township was built in 1973, and since 1974 approximately 2,700 hectares of land has been allocated for construction of industrial and economic projects in the township. 230 industrial companies are operating there and 60 percent of the shares of these companies are owned by the MJF.

190 Million Liters of Petroleum Products Distributed Daily

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN - "At present about 190 million liters of oil products are distributed daily throughout the country," said the managing director of the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company (NIOPDC).

Speaking at a press conference here yesterday, Ali Aqababae said that the country's oil products distribution rate during the first nine months of the Iranian year (March 21 through Dec. 20, 1996) had witnessed a 2.5-billion-liter increase compared to the same period in the previous year.

Aqababae also said: "The average fuel consumption in Iran in the first nine months of the current Iranian year stood at 33.3, 28.5, 60.3 and 39.8 million liters per day for gasoline, kerosene, gasoil and mazut respectively, an increase of 4.4, 14, 6.7, and 3 percent from the same period last year."

"Expansion in transportation and agricultural sectors of the country is the major reason behind the growth in oil products consumption," NIOPDC's managing-director concluded.

Iran, Turkmenistan Discuss Lifting of Customs Duties

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK
TEHRAN (IRNA) - The visiting Turkmen deputy prime minister, Batyr Sardzhayev, and Iran's minister of road and transportation, Akbar Torkan, Saturday evening discussed lifting of customs duties from Iranian trucks and Turkmen commodities.

During the meeting, the two sides stressed the necessity of expansion of transportation of cargoes and passengers by train. Iran and Turkmenistan also expressed willingness to connect the power networks of the two countries.

Sardzhayev is currently here to take part in the tripartite Meeting of Oil and Energy Ministers of Iran, Turkey and Turkmenistan to discuss ways to meet Ankara's needs for natural gas and transfer of gas from Iran and Turkmenistan to Europe via Turkey.

Construction of Largest Packaging Unit Near Completion

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK

TEHRAN (IRNA) - The final construction stage of the country's largest food packaging unit with a capacity of 500,000 tons per annum is underway by the Agriculture Department of the Mostazafan and Janbazan Foundation (MJF). said the department's Managing Director Alaeddin Hussein Ayatollahzadeh.

He said by exploiting its wide and exclusive resources, and using the facilities of the country's bank-

ing system, his department has made substantial investments in establishing and expanding 21 large industrial projects in "dairy products, food and beverages," in the deprived regions, particularly Charmahal-Bakhtiari, Sistan-Baluchestan, Yasuj and West Azerbaijan provinces.

"With the implementation of these projects a large amount of agricultural and animal losses can be avoided," the official concluded.

Non-Oil Exports

canned fish, powdered milk, cabbage, pepper, biscuits, cement, sulfuric acid, cumin and dried plums.

The goods were exported to Germany, Britain, France, Australia, Ukraine, South Africa and the Persian Gulf states.

The value of exported com-

See Page 13

Why Are Chickenmeat Supplies and Prices Fluctuating?

Chick Producers Syndicate was founded in 1970. Today it is called the Chick Producers Association. Its main objectives have been to protect the legitimate and legal rights and interests of its members for the past 26 years, resulting in their and the society's economic well-being.

Today the producers are facing difficulties. Mr. Imami the Chick Producers Association secretary elaborated on these difficulties.

"What has gone unnoticed all these years is that the chicken industry is not just a producing industry but also a consuming one.

"People eat chickenmeat but chickens must also be fed. They too need medicine. A delay in its procurement could inflict severe damages. That's why we can not really call it an industrial production.

"In our country chicken and egg producing costs are higher

"We always talk about the per capita consumption of these important food sources. I think we should also ask, what has really been done to help the producers? What should we do if we produce but there will be no market to consume it? Should we import and thus break the production chain just to combat price rises?"

"On price fluctuations, I'd like to point out that all the poultry feedstuff used to be imported, but it is fair to say that during the recent years some of it such as corn, fish meal, etc., have been produced domestically, due to foreign currency shortages and the implementation of new policies. But the policies have not been stable or long term. There was a drop in our corn production this year, causing price fluctuations.

"Since both chickenmeat and eggs have had drastic production increases following the Free Poultry Production Plan, every time demand dropped, producers experienced losses, due to a lack of a support mechanism, and that caused a drop in production to force prices up.



opments on the quantity and quality of production in our breeder farms during the recent years, but our broilers are still lagging behind due to their traditional practices.

"75 percent of our 14 thousand broiler producers are in need of modernization. Construction Jihad's engineers and technicians can play an important role in solving the problem and eventually lowering the prices.

"Another important point here is that the country is producing 1.2 million tons of chickenmeat and eggs annually and increases have also been projected. Thus there is a need for a new organization taking charge of extension works for modernizing our chicken farms and training the needed experts for them, which will also help to prevent wastes.

"There is also a threat to traditional broiler production which is disease control, and something can be done about it, to some extent, by regional vaccinations, etc. which could improve the efficiency.

"Another step which could play an important role in reducing wastes and the price of the products is a reduction in the marketing age of our broilers. The feed conversion ratio is lower at younger ages.

"We usually slaughter chickens

when they are 55 to 65 days old. That gives us a conversion ratio of 2.4. During the recent days the demand has dropped and our broilers are reaching 80 days old and 2.5 kg before they are slaughtered. That means a 2.7 ratio or more which is too high.

"The more we keep the broilers the more medicine and vaccines we must use. I think it is worth mentioning here to say that the slaughtering age for broilers in

"They all store the production surplus and export it in due time. They even make plans for supplying a certain percentage of the demand in the Third World countries. Export is now used to keep the domestic markets stable.

"Before the year 2000, according to the World Trade Organization (WTO) all countries must reduce their export subsidies, therefore we must try to keep the production costs low in order to keep the export market alive.

"An example is France where people pay 3.1 dollars for every kilogram of chickenmeat they purchase at supermarkets but the export price is 1.5 dollars for the same material delivered to the Iranian ports, the difference is subsidized by the government, soon to be abolished by WTO regulations.

"We should be able to establish a good export market because of our geographical location, well

and we were producing 18 thousand tons a month and today we are producing more than 70 thousand tons at 4,700 rials a kilogram (caused mainly by currency devaluation and subsidies cancellations) which is above the consumers' purchasing power and there are also alternative sources of protein.

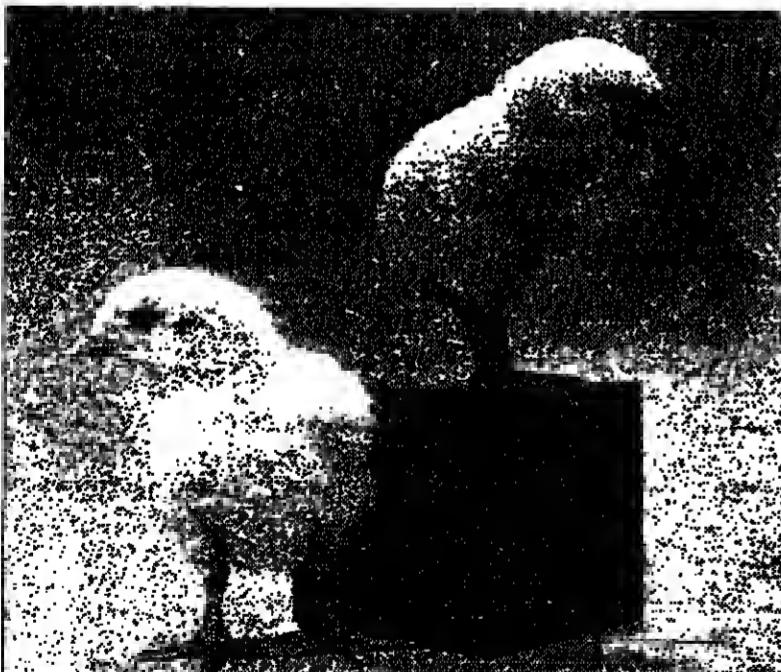
"For all above reasons following are the steps which should be taken to stop price fluctuations:

1- The producers should be provided with all the needed materials at fixed prices and volumes throughout the year.

2- The government should step in to control the market by buying the surplus and selling it at appropriate time.

3- Allocating a portion of the production for export considering the consumers' buying power.

"We must welcome all suggestions to upgrade the chicken industry," Mr. Mostafavi concluded.



than some other chicken producing countries around the world, since we import some of our feedstuff.

"Currently, we are spending 0.6 dollars for producing one kilogram of chicken or eggs, while paying 1.1 dollars to import the same thing. Now why import?

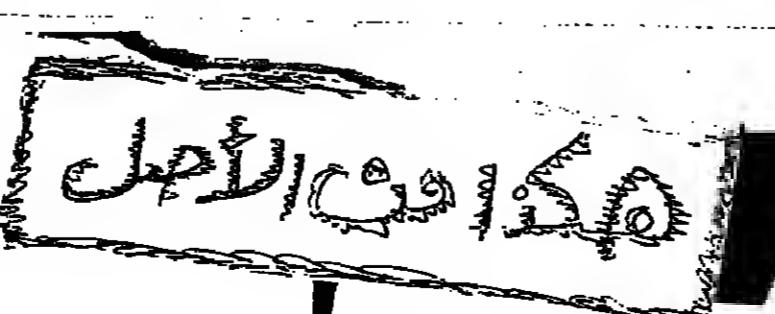
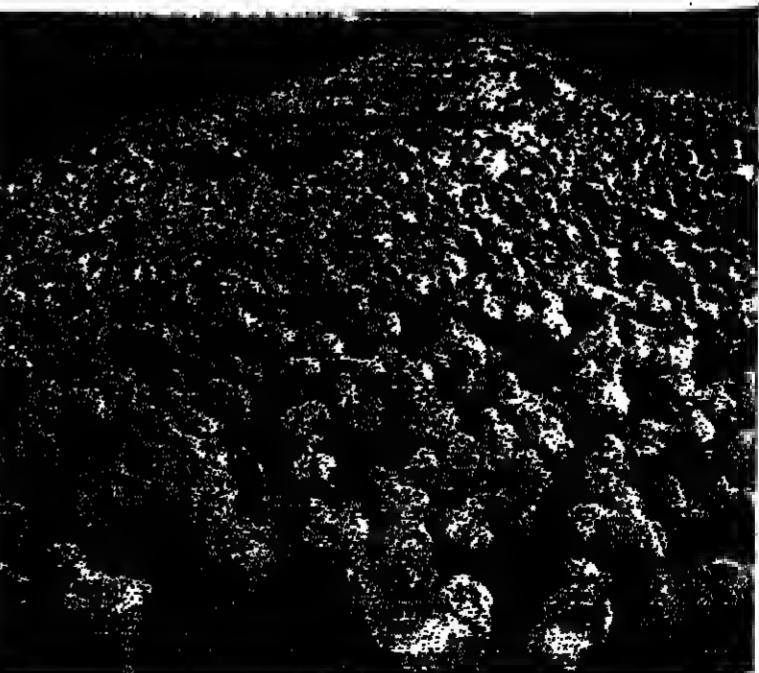
"Even though there are organizations in the country in charge of purchasing and storing the surplus and then marketing it in due time, because of their inability to act timely, we experience price fluctuations.

"Better management and hygiene have made positive devel-

"The per capita chickenmeat consumption was 4 kg annually before the implementation of the First Development Plan which increased to 7.5 kg during the plan and jumped to 11 kg in the Second Development Plan. That means the annual chickenmeat production has increased from 220 thousand tons to 600 thousand tons in 10 years.

"We are domestically producing 500 million broiler chicks, more than 5 million parent broiler breeder chicks and 250 thousand broiler grand parent chicks annually.

"The grand Babol Kenar project which is funded by the government is to raise and keep pure



IRAN

WORLD NEWS

IRAN NEWS

-Oil Export

If given too much sweetened food or beverages that contain too much sugar.

When searching the literature yet another time, I discovered an article by researchers at Vanderbilt University, published in a recent edition of the Journal of the American Medical Association, which for the present puts this notion to rest for me.

In a study that included 560 children and their parents, the results revealed no differences in actions between the group that had been given sugared items and the group that used aspartame as a sweetener. It may be hard for some to give up this long held belief. I am sure many will say "My child is different," but I am convinced sugar does not really affect children's behavior or their ability to learn.

ager, Michael Fay, for vandalism. Singapore rejected U.S. President Bill Clinton's appeal for the punishment to be called off.

Security, trade and cultural ties, however, continued to strengthen after that, and the fact that both governments rule out of official talks on the alleged election meddling issue was seen as an indication that things would quiet down after the polls.

modities rose by 76 percent over this period compared to the same period last year.

Also, 27,000 tons of lead ore as well as 1,400 sq.m of granite have been exported since March 20 from Hamedan Province, west of Iran, to Germany, France, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait.

This showed an increase of 58 percent compared to the same pe-

He started his career as a journalist in 1985 and ever since he was waiting for the day to be posted in Iran.

"I wanted to dig many facts about Iran myself .. the facts which I read in the books," Hasegawa, wearing a sweet smile on his face told IRAN NEWS.

"The news of the 1979 (Islamic) Revolution was very interesting to me there were conflicting reports on the revolution," he said.

"You know," Hasegawa said, "in Japan there is a lack of information about Islam and it was difficult for an ordinary Japanese to understand the importance of the Islamic Revolution."

"Yes, Kyodo helped the Japanese to understand the Iranian revolution through reporting on the developments here," Hasegawa said.

"Last Majlis elections were really interesting particularly a new group appeared at the political horizon of Iran and we, the journalists could write interesting reports with thorough investigation on the elections," he said.

Hasegawa was referring the March-May elections for the Fifth Term of the Majlis for which the G-6 participated for the first time.

"I liked the stories related to the elections in the Iranian media and some time I had to read some things of the debate of the two rival factions in between the lines," Hasegawa said.

Jame-e Rouhaniat-e Mobarez (JRM) and G-6 fielded their candidates and held hectic debates in order to woo the voters.

"As a whole I can say the atmosphere of the election was quite healthy," he said.

Hasegawa is married with 2 1/2 years daughter Nozomi. His wife Yoshie also likes Iran and is learning Persian.

"My daughter Nozomi has also picked up few Persian words such as 'Aab' (water), 'Biya' (come here) and 'Boro' (Go from here)," Hasegawa said.

Both Hasegawa and Yoshie come from Okayama city of western Japan, near Hiroshima.

riod last year.

Meanwhile, 1,592 tons of commodities, worth 1,997 million rials, were exported from Semnan Province during the three months to December 20.

Comprising gas-fired heaters, water heaters, noodles, soap and sweaters, the goods were exported to Germany, U.A.E., Australia, Britain, Syria and Central Asian states.

cil due to irregularities.

According to the Majlis Election Law, the Guardians' Council has full authority to preside over the election process.

Meanwhile, after re-election to the Majlis, Mohammad Majdara from Babolsar died of illness and Hamidreza Sohrabi Ahmad from Rafsanjan whose credentials were rejected by the deputies was ex-pelled from the Majlis.

As a result, in the by-elections to be held on February 7, 23 deputies will be elected to the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majlis).

Political observers believe Isfahan is the most important constituency which will send five deputies to the Majlis.

Hebron one week after an accord is signed, a Palestinian official said Saturday, as both sides prepared for further negotiations on handing over control of the flash-point West Bank town.

"Israeli troops will withdraw to outside 80 percent of the town of Hebron exactly one week after an accord on that issue has been signed with the Palestinian Authority," chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said.

Israel Paralyzed by General Strike

JERUSALEM - A sudden wave of strikes paralyzed airports and rail-

The Council of Ministers of the Persian Gulf states will meet on January 6 in Riyadh." Sheikh Mohammad bin Muharak al-Khalifa told reporters here after talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

A meeting of a four-country mediation committee was held here last night ... And it was decided that the Council of Ministers will meet in Riyadh to discuss the territorial dispute between Qatar and Bahrain," he said.

The council, in its meeting in Cairo yesterday criticized Iran for allegedly deploying missiles on three Iranian Islands on the Persian Gulf.

MEDiation Committee

government-owned companies is such that they are a burden on the annual budget, Nowbakhsh said and appealed to the lawmakers to pay due attention to this matter and find a solution for it.

Another member of the Parliament, Hassan Almasi, drew government attention to the plight of the cotton.

Almasi, a representative from Parsabad, Ardabil Province, said:

"Iran produces the world's best cotton and enjoys a very good reputation across the globe, but the responsible officials and organizations do not pay enough attention to improving the cotton industry in Iran."

He said 100,000 farmers are involved in cotton production on 350,000 hectares of land, and added that cotton producers have

ways and telephone, postal and banking services in Israel yesterday after a union leader was arrested for ignoring a court order.

Thousands of passengers were stranded at Ben Gurion International Airport following a strike call by Israel's main trade union federation, Histadrut, public radio said.

The strikes spread like wild fire and were being observed by employees of the railways, sea ports, health services, public telephone company, banks and postal services, which had stopped work or reduced it to a minimum.

Histadrut issued the strike call shortly after the arrest of union Leader Shlomo Shani yesterday for violating a labor court order prohibiting certain strikes.

Demonstrators demanding that Shani be released burned tires in Tel Aviv, blocking traffic on a major artery, witnesses said.

Israel Will Consider Jordanian Proposal on Jerusalem

JERUSALEM - Israel will consider a proposal from King Hussein of Jordan to grant a special status in Jerusalem to the world's three major monotheistic religions and their holy sites, Foreign Minister David Levy said.

"We will consider King Hussein's proposal after the implementation of the agreement on a military redeployment from Hebron," on the West Bank, the newspaper Yediot Aharonot quoted Levy as saying in yesterday's editions.

"I am doing my best, hoping that the day when all the hostages are released will come as soon as possible," the spokesman quoted Aoki as saying in the message, which was also delivered by released hostages.

Also in the Japanese prime minister's remarks was a re-statement of Tokyo's position against the use of force to solve the hostage stand-off.

"We cannot be totally optimistic, but I hope no get-tough approach is used to solve the crisis," Jiji press quoted him as saying.

He hailed a statement issued recently by Russia and Group of Seven (G7) industrialized countries that ruled out any concession to the MRPA rebels but supported efforts to resolve the crisis "in a peaceful manner with the first objective being to save human lives."

"There has been some criticism that Japan is being too soft in its attitude of giving the priority to the safety of hostages. So it was good that we could have a government-level consensus that also covers the United States and European countries," Hashimoto said.

Among the 83 people still being held are 16 Japanese businessmen and 12 embassy staff members.

PG Ministers to Discuss Qatar-Bahrain Row

CAIRO, EGYPT - Persian Gulf Arab ministers will meet in Riyadh in early January to try to resolve a territorial dispute between Bahrain and Qatar, Bahrain's foreign minister said here on yesterday.

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"Iran produces the world's best cotton and enjoys a very good reputation across the globe, but the responsible officials and organizations do not pay enough attention to improving the cotton industry in Iran."

He said 100,000 farmers are involved in cotton production on 350,000 hectares of land, and added that cotton producers have

876 cooperative societies and produce around 760,000 tons of the natural fiber.

He said that today's agriculture is mechanized and a system should be introduced to ease the suffering of cotton producers.

"Cotton producers need real support of the government for marketing their products along with a guarantee of the price in the light of the prevailing inflation, so that they receive a fair profit.

He complained that the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) also ignores the basic problems of cotton producers by ignoring the relevant provisions made in the Second Five-Year Plan.

Because of the prevailing market situation, brokers or middlemen are exploiting and dominating the cotton business, Almasi said.

Meanwhile, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hiroshi Hashimoto said yesterday that Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda had received a message from Japan's Ambassador to Peru, Morihiwa Aoki.

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PG Ministers to Discuss Qatar-Bahrain Row

Iranian Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Morteza Mohammad-Khan, Minister of Post, Telegraph and Telephone Mohammad Gharazi, Minister of Construction Jihad Gholamreza Forouzesh, Deputy Foreign Minister for Euro-American Affairs Mahmoud Vaezi and several other officials are accompanying Habibi.

Members of the Iranian delegation are scheduled to hold talks with their Tajik counterparts before inspecting a number of cultural and historical sites in Tajikistan.

Azimov also threw a dinner banquet in honor of Dr. Habibi last night.

Message to Niyazov

Dr. Habibi on his way to Tajikistan while flying over the air-space of Turkmenistan, sent a felicitation message to Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov and the Turkmen nation.

"After the independence of Turkmenistan Republic, relations

between the two neighboring countries have become a model of brotherhood based on goodwill of the presidents of the two states.

"We must take the agreements between Iran, Turkey and Turkmenistan on oil and gas cooperation as a good omen because implementation of these agreements will expand cooperation and promote stability and independence between the regional states," the first vice president added in his message.

Iran, Turkmenistan and Turkey here Saturday night signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to meet Ankara's gas needs and to transfer Iranian and Turkmen natural gas to Europe via Turkey.

The agreement was inked by Iran's oil minister, Gholamreza Aqazadeh, Turkish minister of energy and natural resources, Recai Kutuz, and Turkmen deputy prime minister, Bayr Sardzhayev at the end of their tripartite meeting.

CBI also announced it could not earmark foreign currency for imports of mobile telephones and would not offer letters of credit (LC) for this purpose.

ITC has drawn up a contract with Iran Electronic Industries for the production of 100,000 mobile handsets, Director General of ITC Mohammad Zabihi told IRAN NEWS here yesterday after the vote in the Parliament.

ITC has also signed a contract with Industrial Telecommunications of Iran (ITI) for the manufacture of another 100,000 mobile handsets, he added.

Based on the contracts, the receivers will be delivered to Iran in ten months in full compliance with standards of the two companies' foreign partners, Zahili remarked.

Seyed Mustafa Seyed Hashemi, MP from Maragheh, East Azarbaijan Province, also spoke to IRAN NEWS, saying: "Iran has three centers for production of telecommunications devices, Iran's Electronic Industries and the Industrial Telecommunications of Iran (ITI), which are affiliated to the Defense Ministry, and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) which is affiliated to the Ministry of Post, Telegraph, and Telephone (PTT)."

"Regarding the production of mobile telephones, we should assess two points: Does the country need their production? Are they economical? That is to say when will they bring in profits for the country?" he stated.

Seyed Hashemi added, "There should also be the precondition that manufacturers should comply by the standards of the PTT as well as global norms and specifications."

"Speedy transfer of technology would mean inordinate import of equipment and machinery without having the required know-how."

Opposition to Continue

Protests Despite Freeze, Police

BELGRADE (AFP) - Undeterred by sub-zero temperatures and a police crackdown, the Serbian opposition and striking students said yesterday they would continue their daily protests in Belgrade.

The opposition Together Coalition has held mass demonstrations relentlessly since mid-November over the authorities' refusal to recognize opposition gains in local elections.

he stressed.

The people's representative from Maraghch said: "Production in this field should be export-oriented. Production capacities should not be vulnerable to large technological developments at the global level. Our commodities should be compatible with international technology."

"With these conditions in mind, we will be able to produce mobile handsets when we initially import only CKD (spare) parts, then import only SKD (or minor) parts, and finally fully transfer the technology and carry out the entire production process at home," he stressed.

Seyed Hashemi went on to say that, "The entire process hinges on the economic justification of domestic production of mobile handsets."

"Fortunately, in today's open session of the Majlis support for domestic production was at center stage, and the relevant law was also approved," he maintained.

He added: "In the PTT Ministry's tender, the French SAGEM Company and the Finnish Nokia Company were introduced as partners respectively of Iran's Electronic Industries and ITI so that the latter would set up the mobile production line under the former's license."

In response to a question on the delay in the production process, he explained: "The major differences between the ministries of PTT and Industries for the production of mobile telephones were related to bank insurance, delivery of one sample mobile, and use of the ITC's foreign currency."

He added, "Ultimately, Vice President for Executive Affairs Mohammad Hashemi intervened to support domestic production. Thus the decision was taken to draw up contracts with Iran's Electronic Industries Company and the ITI for producing mobile telephones."

"Instead of bank guarantees for manufacturing mobile telephones, the defense minister presented a written guarantee," he pointed out.

The relevant documents are presently with the Central Bank which is carrying out the bank operations on them.

A report submitted by the ITC to the Majlis representatives yesterday indicates that tenders were organized for the manufacture of mobile handsets, and Iran's Electronic Industries Company did not win the tender due to technical considerations and prices.

But, based on an order by the vice president for executive affairs, a contract was signed with the company on November 26, 1996 for the production of 100,000 mobile handsets.

The report also noted that on the recommendation of the Industries Ministry, the ITI, too, has been commissioned to produce another 100,000 mobile sets.

Demonstrators -- and riot police -- were expected to gather in Republic Square in central Belgrade at the usual time of 3 p.m. (14:00 GMT).

IRAN NEWS

Malaysia's Sabah Fears Disease Outbreak After Deadly Storm

KOTA KINABALU, MALAYSIA (AFP) - Malaysia's Eastern Sabah state was bracing Sunday for an outbreak of water-borne diseases after its water supply was damaged in a tropical storm that left 141 people dead and up to 200 missing.

Health Minister Chua Jui Meog placed six flood-hit districts in Sabah on cholera alert, while all medical and health authorities have been directed to mobilize teams to take preventive measures.

Water contamination following the flash floods also threatens an outbreaks of typhoid and diarrhea, Chua warned.

"Right now the water is not safe to drink and people must only consume boiled water," he said.

Sales of ice were banned with immediate effect, while local authorities began cleaning up the flood-hit districts. Emergency fresh water supplies were also being shipped to the affected areas.

Officials at the main search-and-rescue operations center in this state capital said they had not yet received any reports of cholera.

Meanwhile, 300 rescue workers resumed their search at dawn Sunday for victims buried in the debris left behind Thursday by tropical storm Greg, which pounded the west coast of Sabah.

The death toll climbed to 141 with the discovery of six more bodies Sunday, and about 200 were still officially reported missing in the country's worst natural disaster. Most of the victims were Indonesian immigrants.

"Some of the bodies could have been swept into the sea," an official said, referring to riverside settlements badly damaged during the storm and strong currents in the adjacent rivers.

A total of 127 bodies have been recovered from the remote interior of Sabah's Keningau district. The other 14 bodies were discovered in four other districts.

A total of 17,000 people from 3,825 homes in 226 villages on Sabah's west coast were affected by the storm. Three thousand victims are housed at 11 evacuation centers, an official said.

"No one has been found alive today. The search is going on," the official told AFP.

The Timber town of Keningau, 130 kilometers (80 miles) southwest of Kota Kinabalu bore the brunt of tropical storm Greg's fury.

Keningau also faces the highest risk of being struck by disease because it has no clean treated water.

Water supplies to Keningau and to the other six districts was cut off when strong river currents washed away several water mains and damaged pipes.

The official said that although floodwaters were subsiding, rescue workers were having difficulty transporting fuel, food and water to Keningau.

"The bridges and roads are down. This morning, we made a detour of 30 kilometers to reach Keningau. We also sent eight lorries laden with petrol," he said.

Night rescue operations in the battered town had been hampered by lack of fuel, he said.



LIMA, PERU: Michel Minnig (L) of the International Red Cross and Bishop Juan Luis Cipriani (2nd L) greet the 20 hostages who were freed from the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Lima by rebels from the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary December 28. The release followed a visit by government negotiator Domingo Palermo.

(AFP Photo)

Iraqi Refugees Find U.S. Heartland Cold, Bewildering

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA (AFP) - Iraqi refugees resettled in this heartland city after years spent in Saudi desert camps say the language barrier and ignorance of American ways are frustrating their bid for integration into U.S. society.

In interviews conducted here through an interpreter, the mainly southern Iraqi refugees, including army defectors who arrived here earlier this year from Saudi Arabia, were at pains to insist that they do not regret their decision to settle in this midwestern city of 200,000.

"Our biggest problem is that we don't speak English yet. So we have trouble communicating with authorities. We feel lonely and misunderstood," Naima al-Zayda, a 26-year-old Iraqi air force defector, said as she and five other Iraqis sipped hot tea in a rented apartment.

Many of the new arrivals chose Lincoln because relatives or friends already here told them that jobs were easy to find.

"But most companies require good English. So it's hard for us to get jobs," said another Iraqi who asked not to be named.

Al-Zayda was an Iraqi air force mechanic stationed in Nasiriyah, in southern Iraq during the Persian Gulf War. During the uprising against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein which followed, he said he fled to Saudi Arabia, crossing the border which was then manned by U.S. troops.

"I spent six years in a Saudi desert camp. There was nothing to do except play soccer. And the Saudis were mean to us," he said. Last September, he got a lucky break and was picked by visiting U.S. officials to join a group of refugees flown to the United States for resettlement.

All the refugees are processed in New York before picking their final destination.

Al-Zayda said he chose to go to Miami, Florida, where he stayed for one month but could not find work. So heading advice from a friend, he came to Lincoln.

Al-Zayda said he is looking for welding work but is willing to do

any job. He said he will under no circumstance return to Iraq.

On the same flight from Saudi Arabia was another Iraqi army defector, 25-year-old Hussain Maraya.

Although a Siba from southern Iraq, Maraya was stationed at a northern army base in Dobuk near the Turkish border during the Persian Gulf War. He said the base had been under repeated missile attacks from allied forces.

In early 1991, he said he escaped and made his way to Saudi Arabia, crossing the border along with many opponents of Saddam's rule with help from U.S. troops.

Maraya also speaks virtually no English and has not been able to find work so far.

Mark Franken, the New York-based director of the refugee programs run by the U.S. Catholic Conference said some 186 Iraqi refugees had been resettled in the Lincoln area over the past two years.

Under a separate program, the United States is also resettling several thousand Kurds from Northern Iraq who fled an Iraqi assault earlier this year.

Franken said up to 7,000 are expected to be resettled in the United States, including 75 in Lincoln, by next fall.

A first group of Kurds arrived here in October from Guam after being evacuated from Turkey.

On arrival here, each refugee gets about \$32 dollars a month in cash welfare assistance and food stamps.

Catholic Social Services, working under contract from government agencies, also helped the Iraqis find jobs and accommodation. In addition, the agency provides them with a week-long crash course on American culture.

The first Iraqis began arriving here four years ago and the community now numbers around 700, according to Mohammed Nassir, a U.S.-educated Iraqi mechanical engineering researcher at the Uni-

versity of Nebraska.

There are an estimated 250,000 Iraqis in the United States, he added.

Unlike wealthier and bigger Iraqi communities in Dearborn, Michigan, Saint Louis, Missouri, or Dallas, Texas, Lincoln Iraqis have no capital to start small businesses such as supermarkets or restaurants and they need government help, said Nassir, who is the community's unofficial spokesman.

They also need better police, health and administrative information, he added.

Face-lifting, improvement of facilities and landscaping of estate

grounds can instantly raise the value of a flat by tens of thousands of dollars.

Most Singaporean families own their flats, amortizing them with deductions from their accounts with a mandatory pension fund. The internationally envied housing scheme has been studied by other governments.

Goh's indignant reaction came despite the fact that his People's Action Party (PAP), in power since 1959 and widely credited with Singapore's economic success, had already won the election.

Opposition parties are contesting only 36 of the 83 seats, and chose not to challenge Goh himself in his Bailewick.

By mounting a limited challenge, they hope to allay voters' fears of an upset that would unseat the PAP, and thus draw more support for an alternative voice in Parliament. But the ruling party is giving them no quarter.

In an open letter issued over the weekend, the PAP fine-tuned its campaign line, saying constituents that go for the opposition were still entitled to upgrading, but would have to be in the back of the queue.

"If you give strong support, you will be first in line," the letter said.

Goh challenged the opposition to make its stand known, and they did.

Lawyer Chiam See Toog, a member of the outgoing Parliament, said U.S. criticism "shows that the PAP's tactics are not acceptable internationally."

"We don't need the support of the U.S. State Department," said the PAP's long-time Gadfly, J. B. Jeyaretnam of the Workers' Party.

U.S.-Singapore ties have periodically been strained by differences over human rights and political issues, notably the 1994 caning here of an American teacher.

See Page 13

China Hails Russian Ties as a Stand Against U.S. Domination

BEIJING, CHINA (AFP) - China on Sunday hailed Premier Li Peng's visit to Moscow this week as a breakthrough in its efforts to unseat the United States as the world's sole superpower.

In an official Xinhua news agency editorial carried by all major newspapers, Beijing said Premier Li Peng held "in-depth discussions" with Russian President Boris Yeltsin on "the formation of a multipolar world."

"The establishment and development of a strategic partnership between Russia and China is conducive to the multipolarization of the world and to the establishment of a just and fair international economic and political order," the editorial said.

"Both China and Russia are important countries with great influence in the world and they well deserve to be two important and independent poles," it added.

Sino-U.S. relations have been strongly affected by the collapse of the Soviet Union, and China accuses the United States of underestimating its strategic importance now that the Cold War triangle of power between Washington, Moscow and Beijing has been broken.

Although ties between Beijing and Washington are currently improving, the upswing is only re-

cent, and both China and Russia have been making positive overtures toward each other in recent months.

"China's number one aim is to weaken the power of the United States," said David Shambaugh, professor of political science and international affairs at America's George Washington University.

"The United States is the most troublesome country to China's aspirations to change the world order and establish itself as the Asian power," he added.

China's premier returned from Moscow yesterday after being the first foreign leader to meet with Yeltsin since he returned to work after heart surgery.

The editorial said Yeltsin and Li "made it clear that they do not favor a world dominated by one power."

"A country's internal affairs should be dealt with by its own people and international issues should be handled with the equal participation of the international community," it added, in a clear jibe at Washington.

Both nations, which were deeply divided by a three-decade ideological split, hailed the visit as warm and fruitful, with agreements reached on the transfer of military technology, nuclear en-

ergy and finance.

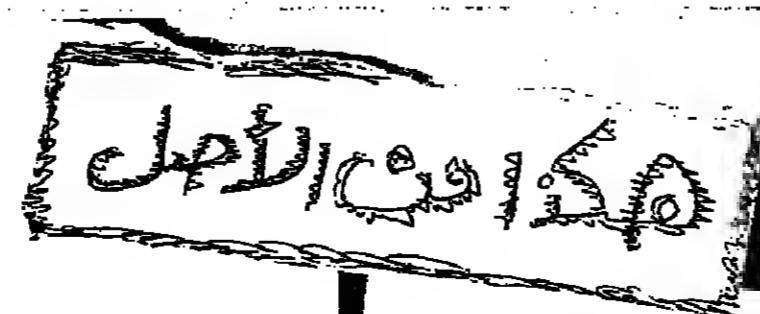
Li's visit also marked the official start of regular meetings with his counterpart Viktor Chernomyrdin, which are similar to those the latter holds with U.S. Vice President Al Gore.

In a further sign of the importance both sides attach to rapidly improving relations, Chernomyrdin announced he would travel to Beijing in the second quarter of 1997, in addition to the state visit of Chinese President Jiang Zemin to Russia in April.

China and Russia first developed close ties in the 1950s when Moscow took on the role of Beijing's big brother, and sent thousands of experts to rebuild China's war-battered bureaucracy, military and heavy industry along Stalinist lines.

But their anti-Western alliance started to crumble in the early 1960s and the Sino-Soviet split lasted through the 1980s, until the two governments put aside their ideological rift in 1989.

In April, Yeltsin and his Chinese counterpart Jiang Zemin signed a strategic partnership accord in Shanghai to mold relations into the 21st century, as well as a border security pact also involving the three former Soviet states of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.



IRAN

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

*With Iran of Special
Choice for Turkey*

Yemen Negotiates for Hostages Release

SANA, YEMEN (AFP) - The Yemeni authorities held fresh negotiations yesterday for the release of several European hostages after their kidnappers killed three policemen during a stakeout of their mountain hideout.

"The negotiations are continuing between the authorities and the kidnappers through MPs (members of Parliament) and tribal leaders," said Stanislas Smolin, the counselor at the Polish Embassy in Sanaa.

Smolin and other diplomats said he believed that the five kidnap victims were Polish, but could not confirm this.

The kidnappers, who belong to

Bomb Blast Rocks Algiers Suburb Injuring 31

ALGIERS, ALGERIA (AFP) - A bomb exploded at a cafe in a residential suburb of eastern Algiers yesterday wounding 31 people in the fourth bomb attack in a week on the capital, witnesses and doctors said.

The blast went off at the Hafsi Cafe near a local administrative building in the El Harrach district, witnesses added.

Doctors at the Zmirli Hospital said 31 people had been wounded.

On Friday 12 people, including a two-year-old girl, were hurt

Workers Stage Anti-Government Protests in Seoul

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA (AFP) - Some 25,000 angry workers marched around ruling party headquarters here yesterday to protest an unpopular new labor law that has led to crippling strikes in South Korea's major industries.

Following a day of violence, the massive strikes simmered down yesterday, but the labor crisis is expected to escalate on Tuesday when 47,000 unionists at Korea Telecom, a nationwide state-run communications network, start walking out.

The Korea Telecom Union, however, said its members have to endorse the strike proposal in a vote today.

"Down with (President) Kim Young-Sam!" shouted protesters yesterday, wearing headbands and carrying union flags, during a boisterous march past the ruling New Korea Party (NKP) headquarters building near Parliament.

Some 8,000 riot police, who used tear gas to crush labor protests Saturday, avoided clashes, maintaining a tight blockade around the Parliament building and the NKP office, an AFP photographer said.

Tunisians Vote on Religion

TUNIS, TUNISIA (AP) - President Zine el Abidine Ben Ali on Saturday announced a referendum to approve the current illegality of religion-based political parties, his latest effort to wipe out political Islam.

Ben Ali did not give a date but said Tunisians soon will vote to keep or discard a 1988 law that bans parties based on religion, race or language.

IRAN
INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Hopes Soar for Korean Peace After North's Apology

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA (AFP) - North Korea made an unprecedented apology yesterday for a submarine incursion into South Korean waters, giving a major boost to peace hopes for the volatile peninsula.

A brief two-paragraph expression of "deep regret" from the North's Foreign Ministry was aired by Pyongyang's official media.

"The spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) is authorized to express deep regret for the submarine incident ... that caused the tragic loss of human life," the statement said.

"The DPRK will make efforts to ensure that such an incident will not recur and will work with others for durable peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula."

The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported the apology in English and Radio Pyongyang broadcast it in Korean.

The breakthrough ended three months of saber-rattling and was flashed nationwide by television stations south of the de-militarized zone.

South Korea immediately welcomed the apology as "sincere" and "acceptable" though belated and said it was preparing to repatriate the bodies of 24 crew killed after the submarine ran aground on



SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA: South Korean Foreign Minister Yoo Chong-ha (R) reads a statement, Dec. 29. (AFP Photo) September 18.

But the submarine and the sole crewman captured would not be returned, it said.

"The repatriation of the bodies will be discussed through the appropriate channels soon," the South's Foreign Minister Yoo Chong-Ha said.

Yoo said that now inter-Korean relations had returned to normal, "in principle" the two sides were ready to hold a briefing session on

Anti-Taliban Alliance Hits Back After Battlefield Losses

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN (AFP) - Warplanes from the anti-Taliban alliance have bombed the Afghan capital scoring direct hits in a series of raids after losing territory in renewed ground fighting with the Islamic militia.

Sources said a 500-kilogram (1,100-pound) bomb hit north of Kabul International Airport terminal on Saturday night, a 250-kilogram bomb exploded near a hangar and another of a similar size just outside the airport.

An official source said only minor structural damage was caused and there were no casualties or damage to Taliban aircraft. The airport was operational yesterday.

A second raid targeted the

presidential palace in central Kabul. The compound was hit by two bombs, but Taliban guards gave no further information.

A third night attack came near the Khaibar Khan Pass, northwest of Kabul, which is a key supply route to the frontlines where bitter clashes erupted on Friday.

The Muslim militia, who have controlled Kabul since September 27, launched a dawn offensive from their month-old frontlines and captured the district center of Qarabagh, 45 kilometers (28 miles) north of Kabul.

By Saturday afternoon the Taliban were reported to have advanced several kilometers (miles) north of Qarabagh to an key road intersection.

Bomb Explodes in Lhasa on Christmas Day

BEIJING, CHINA (AFP) - A large bomb explosion in the Tibetan capital on Christmas Day has sparked official warnings from China of an all-out terrorist campaign from separatist groups led by the Dalai Lama.

The bomb exploded outside the offices of the Lhasa city metropolitan district shortly after 0100 hours on Wednesday (16:00 GMT Tuesday), a Chinese official from Tibet People's Radio told AFP in a telephone interview.

The World at a Glance



ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN - A mountain of mud buried eight Pakistani soldiers as they slept and injured another six in the Himalayan mountains last Thursday, news reports said yesterday.

PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA - A Briton abducted in March has been reported alive in a Khmer Rouge stronghold near the Thai border, a rebel defector and the Cambodian government's investigation chief said yesterday.

LAGOS, NIGERIA - The U.S. ambassador to Nigeria, Walter Carrington, will explain today why Washington has issued warnings about possible bomb attacks on Nigerian airports, U.S. officials said yesterday.

DUSHANBE, TAJIKISTAN - A Briton and a South African who work for a gold-mining joint venture were freed Saturday with their two Tajik interpreters after a month in captivity by Tajik rebels, a Russian news agency said.

RIYADEH, SAUDI ARABIA - Two British nurses accused of murdering an Australian colleague allegedly called the victim an "old woman" no longer capable of doing her job before hitting her with a teapot and stabbing her with a kitchen knife, a Saudi newspaper said yesterday.

MOGADISHU, SOMALIA - Sudan's Charge d'Affairs in Somalia Ali Hassan Ali has urged Somalis to take up arms and fight Ethiopia in a Jihad (holy war) to counter Ethiopia's recent invasion of the southern Somali region of Gedo, the Mogadishu Times newspaper reported here yesterday.

(DISPATCHES)

Guatemala Ends Nearly Four Decades of Civil War

GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA (AFP) - Guatemalan government and rebel leaders were poised yesterday to end 36 years of civil war by signing a historic peace agreement.

The region's longest conflict, in which an estimated 150,000 people have died and 50,000 have disappeared, will formally end at 23:00 GMT when the rebel chiefs

sign an overall peace treaty with the conservative government of President Alvaro Arzu.

The agreement is the fruit of five years of negotiations.

The chiefs of three of the four leftist rebel groups composing the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) and a high-level official of the fourth arrived here Saturday. They were met by



GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA: Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) supreme commanders Jorge Rosal (L) and Rolando Moran (C) arrive at the Guatemala City La Aurora International Airport Dec. 28. (AFP Photo)

a multitude of URNG sympathizers, union members, and reporters.

Indigenous activist and 1992 Nobel peace prize winner Rigoberta Menchu was among those on hand to greet the guerrillas, saying their arrival was "an important moment, full of emotion."

But she cautioned that Guatemalans remained somewhat skeptical of the agreement. "It's logical, because Guatemalans have lived 36 years of hopelessness, repression, massacres and unfulfilled promises to better their deteriorating living conditions," she said.

The signing of the peace agreements ought to mark a starting point for Guatemalans to begin discussing the economic and social problems of the nation which are the root of the problem, which sparked the war," he said.

The URNG delegation was composed of leftist rebel commanders Rolando Moran, Carlos Gonzalez and Pablo Monsalvo, leaders of their respective movements, and Jose Rosal, representing his group's leader, Gaspar Ilom.

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Brown Beats Komen, Wami Wins Women's Race
DURHAM, ENGLAND (AP) - European champion Jon Brown outran Kenya's Daniel Komen Saturday to win a 9.3 kilometer cross country race. Brown opened a 15-yard (meter) lead at the half-way mark, but Komen came back at him and the lead continued to change hands. Brown stayed concentrated and punched the air in celebration as he crossed the line three seconds clear in 28 minutes 24 seconds. Komen clocked 28:27 and third place South African Hendrick Ramaala was a further four seconds back. Gete Wami of Ethiopia held off a challenge from Romania's Elena Fidatov to win the 5.2 km women's race.

Sports Highlights

Morning Glory Wins Sydney to Hobart

HOBART, AUSTRALIA (AP) - German maxi Morning Glory overcame light winds near the finish to take line honors in the Sydney-to-Hobart Yacht Race early Sunday, breaking a 21-year record.

American maxi Kialoa's record stood since 1975 until the purple-hulled 80-foot Morning Glory glided across the line 29 minutes and 46 seconds faster than the previous mark.

The record of 2 days, 14 hours, 36 minutes, 56 seconds for the 630 nautical miles (1,165 kilometers) was set by American skipper Jim Kilroy in Kialoa III.

After the swift run up the Derwent River to clinch the record, Morning Glory owner and German industrialist Hasso Plattner said the \$240,000 prize for breaking the previous race record would be shared among the 21 members of the crew.

When the wind dropped three times during the final stages of the race, Plattner thought the record might be safe for another year.

"I couldn't stand it, I went below and looked at the computer for a while and then the wind came back," he said after the race.

"The crew never gave up."

Plattner, who had to fly in a new mast and fit it before the Sydney to Hobart after breaking one in one of the preliminary races, said his Reichel-Pugh-designed maxi had a great race.

After recovering from a bad start, Morning Glory had to weather 40-knot winds and did so without the mainsail, Plattner said.

The winds caused the German's main rival, Australian maxi Brindabella, to lose a mast and retire from the race.

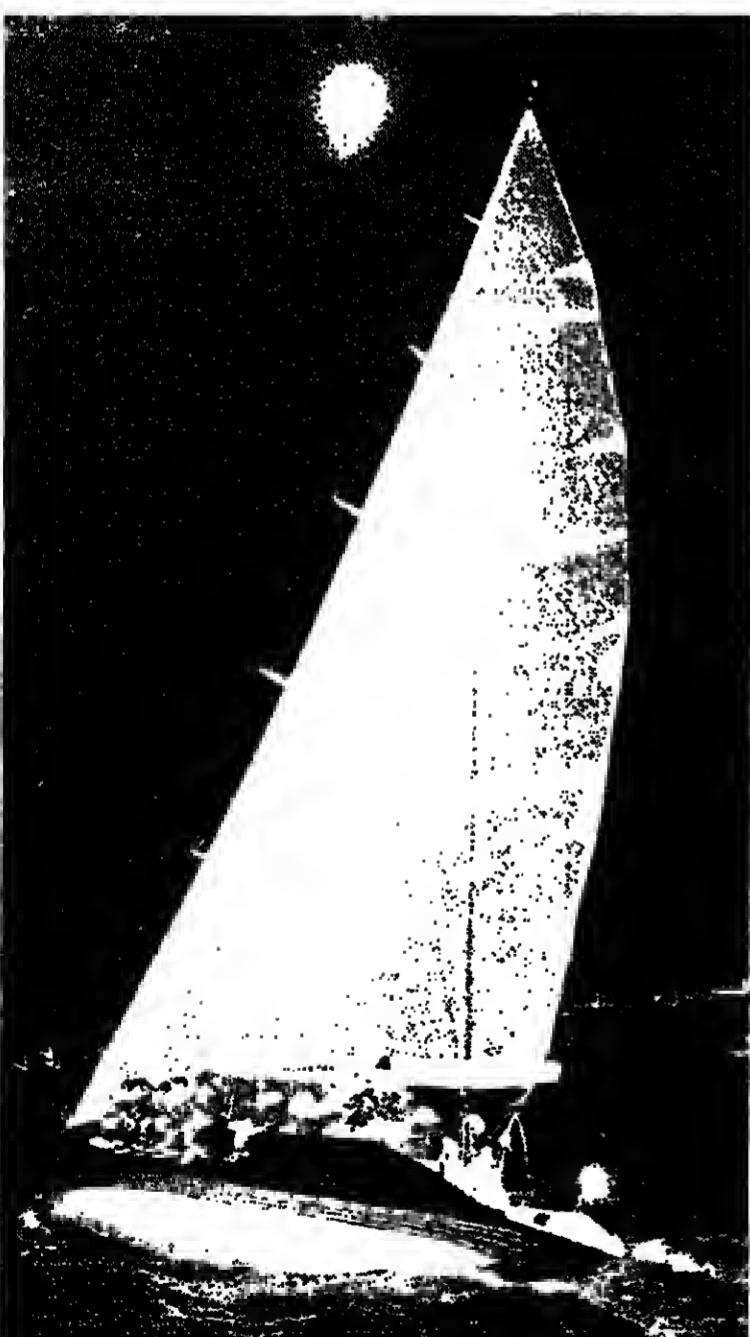
"We made it through the night, exile just behind us," he said.

"We lost them the next day, we were 10 miles behind, (then) got in the lead at maximum speed, 24 knots sailing down the waves.

"Then we approached Tasmania and everything was looking good and then the wind died again."

Pocket maxi Exile was expected to be the second boat to cross the finish line, with Foxtel Amazon, another pocket maxi, likely to finish third.

A further 17 boats were expected to finish Sunday from the field of 78, down from the 95 that began the race last Thursday in Sydney Harbor.



HOBART, AUSTRALIA: German maxi Morning Glory heads up the Derwent River towards the lights of Hobart to win and break the race record in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race in Hobart December 29.

(AFP Photo)

IRAN NEWS

SPORTS



Russian Player Injured as Burglars Raid Goalie's Home

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM (AP) - A Russian soccer player was badly beaten by burglars who raided the home of Belgian goalkeeping legend Jean-Marie Pfaff. Belgian newspapers reported Saturday. Kyri Varaksin, 22, was hit in the face with brass knuckles by intruders who broke into Pfaff's house. "Kyri's soccer career is hanging in the balance," Pfaff told the daily Het Belang Van Limburg newspaper. The Russian player, also a goalkeeper, suffered a broken nose and shattered cheek. Varaksin was staying as Pfaff's guest while preparing his transfer from Cska Moscow to Belgian First Division side Germinal Ekeren.

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Late Goal Gives Canada 4-4 Draw with Americans

GENEVA (AP) - Peter Schaefer scored with 3:06 remaining to give Canada a 4-4 draw Saturday with the United States at the World Junior Ice Hockey Championship.

Schaefer came out of the right corner, faked one defenseman and beat goalie Brian Boucher for the tying goal for Canada, which hasn't lost in three years at this tournament.

The result left the Czech Republic, the United States and Canada even on points atop group A with 1-1-0 records. The Czechs lead on goal differential with the United States next.

The United States plays the Czech Republic on Sunday.

The Canadians have Sunday off before meeting host Switzerland on Monday.

The United States-Canada game was one of two played Saturday. In the other, Finland beat Sweden 4-2 at Morges. The Finns are 2-0-0 in Group B. They play Russia, also 2-0-0 for the Group lead today.

In another Group, Germany plays Switzerland. Slovakia meets Poland in a second Group B game today at Morges.

B.J. Young gave the Americans a 4-3 lead on a backhander at 15:46 of the third period after teammate Tom Poti did a nice job of keeping the puck in the Canadian zone.

Speedy Daniel Briere broke a 2-2 tie at 6:24 of the second period, but Dan LaCouture tied it for the Americans 28 seconds into the third.

Christian Dube, on loan from the New York Rangers, scored twice in the first period around American goals by Mark Parrish and Jeff Farkas.

Dube scored from a scramble in front of Boucher 1:18 into the game but Parrish, with his third of the tournament, beat goalie Mark Denis with a low wrist shot to the stick side only 30 seconds later.

NFL Playoffs

Wild Cards
Saturday, Dec. 28
Jacksonville 30, Buffalo 27

Dallas 40, Minnesota 15

Sunday, Dec. 29
Indianapolis at Pittsburgh

Philadelphia at San Francisco

Divisional Playoffs
Saturday, Jan. 4

San Francisco or Philadelphia at Green Bay

Jacksonville or Indianapolis at Denver

Sunday, Jan. 5
Pittsburgh or Jacksonville at New England

Dallas at Carolina Conference Championships

Sunday, Jan. 12
Super Bowl

Sunday, Jan. 26 at New Orleans

Pro Bowl

Sunday, Feb. 4 at Honolulu

AFC vs NFC

Parliament Gives Approval to 1997

Keep Faith, Urges Taylor

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA (AP) - Recalled batsmen Matthew Hayden and Justin Langer deserve another chance against the recharged West Indies in the fourth cricket test, captain Mark Taylor said Sunday in the wake of Australia's comprehensive loss in the third test.

The West Indies, facing the point of no return after losing the opening two tests in the best-of-five match Frank Worrell Trophy series, hit back magnificently here Saturday, beating the Australians by six wickets inside three days to trail 2-1 with two tests to play.

After weeks of criticism for their lethargic form, the Windies recaptured their killer instinct of old, led by the Antiguan assassin, Curtly Ambrose, who destroyed the Australian top order with match figures of 9-72.

Australian selectors, accused of a "revolving door policy", pitched Hayden and Langer into the Australian top order to fill the enforced vacancy of injured opener Matthew Elliott and sacked No.3 Ricky Ponting.

Amid a backdrop of general batting failures with the exception of Steve Waugh and a first innings 62 by Greg Blewett, Hayden and Langer's injudicious shot-making were highlighted in the post-match recriminations.

Hayden, playing in only his second test and pitched into battle on the strength of his 224 not out batting for an Australian XI last

month against the West Indies, minus Ambrose and Courtney Walsh, was out for five and a duck to a dreadful decision not to offer a shot.

Langer was suicidally run out for 12, soon after hooking Kenny Benjamin for six, and played a poor attempted hook on his seventh ball to be out for a duck in the second innings.

Selectors are in a dilemma with the fourth Adelaide test followed just three days later by the fifth and final test in Perth. Eight days after the Perth Test Australia open their tour of South Africa.

In the meantime, Hayden and Langer have chances to keep the selectors' faith with big scores in Sheffield Shield matches for their respective states in the buildup to the Adelaide test, although both will not play in the one-day triangular series against the Windies and Pakistan.

"Hayden and Langer are probably going to deserve more than one chance because no one did particularly well on the Melbourne County Ground wicket, Jimmy Adams' 74 not out was the highest score in the (Melbourne) test," said Taylor.

"It's a matter of giving these guys more experience and a few more games at this type of bowling.

"If they can do that they will get a lot more confidence and get used to playing this kind of cricket.

"We have a lot of guys doing well at Shield level, but Shield Cricket is totally different to playing the West Indies."

Taylor accepted some of the blame for the situation Hayden and Langer are in by acknowledging his "lean trot" with the bat.

In six innings against the West Indies in the series, Taylor has hit a total of 143 runs and has yet to score a half-century.

In both innings in the Melbourne Test, Australia were exposed at 27 for four and 47 for four, putting too much on the remainder of the batting, in particular Steve Waugh, to build a respective total.

"I have to make some runs at the top of the order, if I do that it will take the pressure off some of the other guys," said Taylor.

"We had Hayden and Langer coming into their first test match for a while, it's a different ball game playing these guys (Windies) at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on an uneven wicket than playing in a Sheffield Shield game,"

Taylor pinpointed his batting problems stemming from tardy footwork.

"I've got to get the feet moving a bit quicker, (although) I'm not playing all that bad, I've batted a long time for not a lot of runs, so it's a matter of getting the feet moving quicker."



Parliament Gives Preliminary Approval to 1997 Budget

MOSCOW (AP) - Russian lawmakers took a big step Saturday toward passing the 1997 budget, approving a detailed budgetary plan with about 2,000 amendments.

The speaker of the state Duma, parliament's lower house, called it "maybe the worst budget ever" but said it was necessary to pass it.

The Duma voted 243-117 to approve the draft on the third of four required readings.

"We'll still have battles before the fourth reading," Finance Minister Alexander Livshits said after the vote.

Parliament already approved overall spending and revenue figures earlier this month. Saturday's vote was on individual budget allotments.

The Duma's budget committee worked almost round-the-clock in

the past several days, writing about 2,000 amendments to the government's draft.

The budget plan now faces a final Duma vote before going to the upper house and then President Boris Yeltsin for approval.

The Duma's holiday break began after Saturday's vote, meaning Russia will enter the New Year without a budget. Livshits said the government would adhere to the still-unapproved budget plan rather than suspend funding.

The budget is the centerpiece of the government's economic program for next year and envisions the first economic growth since the start of reforms in 1992, but skeptics say its projections are not realistic. The government lobbied hard to push the plan through the Communist-dominated parliament.

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Several Arab states still impose restrictions on capital transfer while those in the oil-rich Persian Gulf do not allow 100 percent foreign ownership.

Such factors have combined with political instability in the region to discourage foreign investors and even force out the bulk of domestic funds.

Arab States Urged to Reform Investment Laws

ABU DHABI (AFP) - Arab countries should provide more protection to foreign capital as part of investment law reform to attract funds, Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdel Meguid said.

Arabs should benefit from a landmark agreement signed by more than 120 countries to open up their borders under World Trade Organization accords to increase global investment and commercial exchange.

"The Arab countries need to revise their trade and investment laws if they want to get their share of international investment," Meguid told the United Arab Emirates economic weekly Emirates Today which published on Saturday.

"Such laws should enable investors to make good profits, provide enough protection for their capital and ensure guarantees for their continuation."

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According to official figures,



ESMAT ABDEL MEGUID

inter-Arab investments are estimated at around \$13 billion, a fraction of the overseas assets of the 22-member Arab League of between \$600 billion and \$800 billion.

Meguid said the Cairo-based league would organize an investment conference in the first half of 1997 to draw up proposals for improved investment laws and identify business opportunities in

the region, which officials expect to attract large funds after the establishment of a comprehensive peace.

"The Arab League believes investment plays a vital role in economic development in the Arab region ... the current investment inflow does not meet the requirements of the Arab people," he said.

Established as the Union Bank of the Middle East in 1977, the bank has grown to become one of the leading financial institutions in the region. The bank currently operates 37 branches in the Emirates and 11 abroad.

Riyadh - An international consortium including Saudi Arabian, British and German companies announced plans Saturday to build a petrochemical plant at a cost of 225 million euros (\$60 million).

The plant, to be built at the Red Sea port of Yanbu in Saudi Arabia, will produce 260,000 tons a year of Cumene, a petrochemical used to produce phenol and acetone for use in products such as building materials, carpets, cosmetics and medicines.

Members of the consortium include Germany's Phenol Chemie and Saudi Arabia's privately owned International Petrochemical Co. Chem systems of the United Kingdom is conducting the feasibility study for the plant. Technology for the plant will be supplied by Uop Inc. of the United States.

The petrochemical plant will receive customs exemptions and industrial loans and be provided with raw materials from state-owned petrochemical suppliers, the consortium said in a statement.

KUWAIT - The government's Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has extended soft loans to Syria worth 268 million dinars (\$893.33 million) since 1969, a newspaper reported Saturday.

Al-Rai al-Amman daily quoted the deputy director general of the fund, Abdul Wahab al-Bader, as saying the long-term loans with a maximum interest of 3 percent were used to finance infrastructure projects including roads, sewage systems and electricity plants.

The official said the fund was considering several requests from the Syrian government for new loans to finance a highway, a 10-million-ton silo and irrigation networks.

Conference on Unemployment in Egypt Opens

CAIRO, EGYPT (AP) - A three-day "Egypt 2000" conference opened Saturday to discuss ways of combating unemployment as the country tries to expand its economy.

Prime Minister Kamal el-Ganzouri said in a statement read to the opening session that Egypt will achieve a 7 percent economic growth rate by the year 2000, reducing the annual increase in joblessness.

Earlier this week, the government announced that 3 million jobs will be created before the year 2002, and that unemployment will be reduced to 5 percent.

The government estimates joblessness at 9.6 percent of the work force; international economists

put it nearly double that rate.

In recent years, the Egyptian economy has been growing at between 2.5 percent and 4 percent a year, a positive performance but not enough to create the jobs needed to absorb the estimated 500,000 people who enter the job market annually.

Egypt, with 60 million people, launched an economic reform program in 1991 to dismantle its legacy of central planning and state ownership from socialist policies of the 1960s.

The reforms included new laws to encourage private business, foreign investment and trade as well as plans to sell off more than 300 state-run industries.

Japanese Consortium to Develop Oil Fields in Caspian Sea

TOKYO (AFP) - A consortium of Japanese companies has agreed with the government of Azerbaijan to develop oil fields in southern Caspian Sea, a business daily said Sunday.

The governmental Japan National Oil Corp. is expected to exchange notes with the oil-rich Central Asian republic in February and set up a joint venture with private-sector firms in March, the Nikkei Keizai Shimbun said.

The companies to be involved in the project are Itochu Corp., Japan Energy Corp., Teikoku Oil Co. and Indonesia Petroleum Ltd.

Russia, CIS Oil Production to Stay Stable Next Year

MOSCOW (AP) - Oil production from Russia and the countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) will remain stable in 1997, an expert study said Saturday quoted by oil news agency PIA.

Next year Russia should produce around 6.1 to 6.3 million barrels per day (bpd), refine around 3.3 to 3.5 million bpd and export about 2.5 to 2.7 million bpd, according to the study by the World Energy Analysis and Forecasting Group and Russia's International Center for Commercial Oil Studies.

The whole of the CIS should produce around 7.2 to 7.4 million bpd and refine around 4.7 to 4.9 million bpd.

In 1996 Russia produced 6.1 million bpd and refined 3.4 million while the CIS - all former Soviet republics minus Estonia,

it said.

The partners plan to develop two areas stretching over 7,400 square kilometers (2,960 square miles) in the southern Caspian Sea, which have estimated oil deposits of seven billion barrels, the paper said.

Azerbaijan President Geydar Aliyev first proposed the development in September to help develop oil-related industries in the former Soviet republic.

Japan also hopes the project will help expand its sources of stable oil supply, the paper said.

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The government said during the four days of debate on the budget that its goal was to spur

economic development while protecting social services for the most needy.

Revenues for 1997 are targeted at 1.69 billion dinars (\$2.3 billion) while expenses are set at 1.91 billion dinars (\$2.68 billion).

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The budget's priority is the creation of 3,000 jobs in 1997 to help overcome the country's 15 percent unemployment rate.

The sudden resignation of Asirwatham followed reports in a

Jordan Approves Budget with \$315m Deficit

AMMAN (AP) - The Jordanian parliament on Saturday approved a 1997 budget with a 225 million dinar (\$315 million) deficit.

Fifty-three out of 68 deputies voted for the budget and 15 opposition members voted against it.

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The sudden resignation of Asirwatham followed reports in a

state-run newspaper recently that the PERC was headed for a major shake up over the controversial deal with shell last year.

The PERC was also facing mounting criticism from trade unions as well as leftist legislators from within the ruling party over the sale of a steel mill to South Korea's Hanjin Company, plus other impending deals.

There was no immediate word from the government about the developments at PERC, but Asirwatham was quoted in a privately run Sunday paper as saying: "Don't talk about these things

during the Christmas season."

On Friday, dock workers at the Colombo harbor, the country's main sea port, struck work to protest plans to lease a section of the facility to Britain's Peninsula and Oriental Steam Navigation Co. (P&O).

Trade unions at the Oruwella Steel Mill are continuing protests and have prevented the new South Korean owners from taking possession of the manufacturing plant, where one worker committed suicide after police questioning.

Economic Digest

RIYADH - Sales by the 100 largest Saudi companies rose in 1996 to 297.3 billion riyals (\$79.2 billion), up by 38.6 billion riyals (\$10.2 billion) from last year, a private study showed Saturday.

The study, prepared by the International Data and Commercial Services Co., said Saudi Aramco topped the list with the highest sales for the year, 152 billion riyals (\$40.5 billion).

Saudi Basic Industries Corp. was second with 23.6 billion riyals (\$6.2 billion), followed by Dallah al Barakah with total sales of 12.9 billion riyals (\$3.4 billion).

The 100 largest companies employed a total of 306,000 people, with combined assets of 617.5 billion riyals (\$164.6 billion).

DUBAI - The Dubai-based Emirates Bank International is planning to open branches in the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council countries as part of a major expansion, its chairman said.

Ahmed Humaid al-Tayer, who is also the United Arab Emirates' minister of state for finance and industry, said Friday that the (P)GCC countries constituted an important market. The (P)GCC is an economic and political alliance that groups the Emirates with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman.

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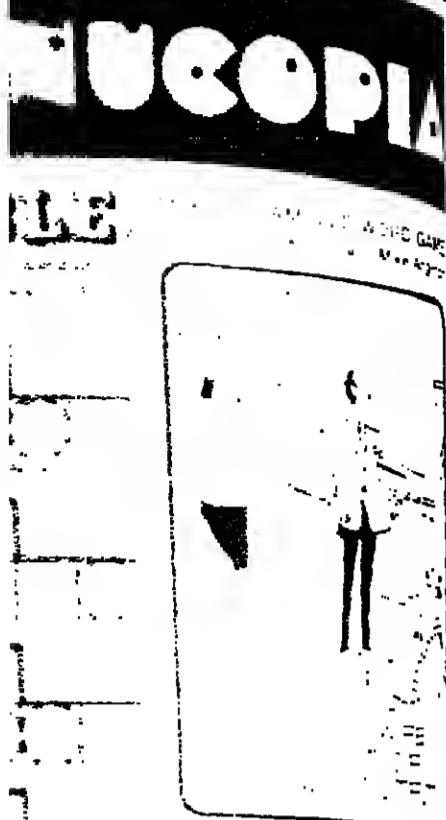
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*Future of Italy's
Mamas and
Bambinos Under
Threat*

ROME (AFP) - The future looks bleak for Italian 'mamas' and 'bambinos' as 1995 saw Italians marrying less and having fewer children, according to a report published by the Italian National Statistics Institute.

Births hit their lowest ever ebb in 1995 with only 521,345 bouncing babies being born. The future of the formidable Italian wife/mother is also in doubt with only 283,125 marriages in 1995, down from 291,607 in 1994.

A report published by Romano Prodi's Centre-Left government in July said the Italian child, living in an adult world, suffers from "profound solitude" and is a "species under threat of extinction."

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VISA MASTERCARD

Survey Shows Japan Kids Taller, But Less Healthy

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japanese schoolchildren are taller than their counterparts 30 years ago, but have poorer eyesight and are sicker because of excessive videogame playing and overstudying, a government survey showed recently.

Japanese high school students are on average four centimeters (1.5 inches) taller than their counterparts 30 years ago, according to the Education Ministry's 1996 school children's health survey.

But more schoolchildren now suffer more from asthma, obesity, dental problems and shortsightedness than in previous years.

"Video games are undoubtedly one of the causes of the deteriorating eyesight of schoolchildren... another cause is excessive studying for exams," said the Minis-

try's Kazunari Asanuma, who organized the survey.

He said that shortsightedness among schoolchildren is at its highest level ever.

Many students prepare for so-

called "exam hell" by attending special night schools, after their regular classes, in order to study for exams which they must pass to gain entrance to exclusive high schools and universities.

Beijing Introduces Free

Grain and Oil for Urban Poor

BEIJING (AFP) - China's capital has introduced free grain and oil coupons to residents with a monthly income of less than 170 yuan (\$20.5), the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

In a bid to support its new urban poor - the result of economic reforms which have left many without employment or a social security - the municipal government started providing

coupons providing 20 yuan of free oil and grain a month from December 1.

It also set a recommended minimum wage of 270 yuan and set the minimum income level required to survive in Beijing at 170 yuan, the news agency reported.

The municipal government refused to provide figures for how many of Beijing residents earned less than 170 yuan.

China Finds Records Describing Life in Ancient Times

BEIJING (AP) - Tens of thousands of bamboo and wooden records that give a picture of life in ancient China have been found in a 1,700-year-old well, in what one expert described yesterday as one of the great Chinese archaeological finds of the century.

The well in Changsha, a city in central China's Hunan Province, served as a cellar for archives in the Wu state during China's three kingdoms period, which lasted from 222 A.D. to 280 A.D., the state-run Xinhua News Agency said.

The bamboo and wooden pieces found in the well were covered with 200,000 Chinese characters detailing Changsha's

political, economic, military, cultural and geographical situation, including details on taxes, rents, the legal system, the administration and other aspects of government, Xinhua said.

At a news conference yesterday, Yu Weichao, curator of the Museum of Chinese History, said more pieces had been found than ever before in China. He described it as one of the country's most significant finds of the century, Xinhua said.

The cellar was submerged by rising ground water at some point in history, preventing the records from cracking up because of dryness, it said.

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How to reach industrial self-sufficiency

Introduction:

Many modern technological advances serving humanity nowadays started out from defense industries which are considered as technological pioneers by many observers.

Blending defense and civil industries dates back to the ancient times. Alexander would always ask the military engineers and experts to do the post-war reconstruction jobs.

Germany and Japan followed suite during the post world-war II era turning their countries into the most industrialized and wealthiest nations in the world, becoming models for the others.

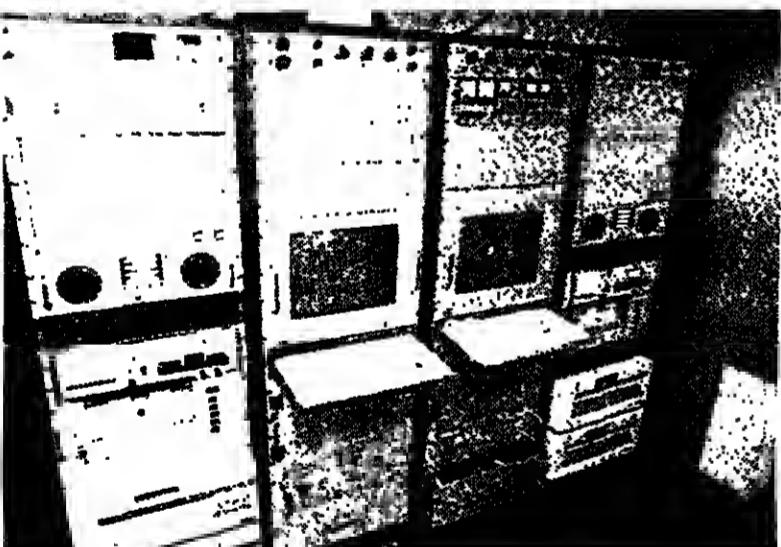
Many observers believe that Iranians transformed herself into the most faithful and sincere warrior and the region's most powerful country following the 8 year old war.

That laid the suitable ground for our defense industries to act as civilian during peace time. Shahid Shah Abadi complex started its civil activities in 1992.

The complex has been most successful in manufacturing the nation's industries' vital spare parts during the past 4 years particularly those needed by the oil wells and the National Iranian Drilling Company.

By doing so, it has proven that economic and political independence is based on self-confidence and self sufficiency.

In the following report, Dr. Assemi Pur, National Iranian Drilling Company's managing director, and the director of Shahid Shah Abadi Industrial Complex both elaborated on the above mentioned issue.



In the past, three large and accredited foreign companies were the exclusive manufacturers of gun perforatings.

The Directors and self-belief

Q: Dr. Assemipoor, what was your motivation when you decided to substitute the American, British and French parts with those made in your complex? While a valuable move, was it not risky?

A: "To reach true independence, every country must be self-sufficient and economically needless. Also paying attention to domestic potentials and capabilities is of utmost importance."

"The beginning point for every development and innovation is the

active and creative mind of a human being which is not usually appreciated.

"Unfortunately, we do not value our innovators and brave decision makers. We inaugurate factories or exhibit the finished products, but never organize exhibitions of new ideas or creative minds to persuade others."

"Till just recently, the foreigners were building silos for us, but now, the Construction Jihad is building them not only in Iran, but in Central Asia and Africa," the managing director said.

Shahid Shah Abadi Industrial Complex's Eye-Catching Success

Shooting at Dependency w

Defense and Civil Industries, Hand in Hand

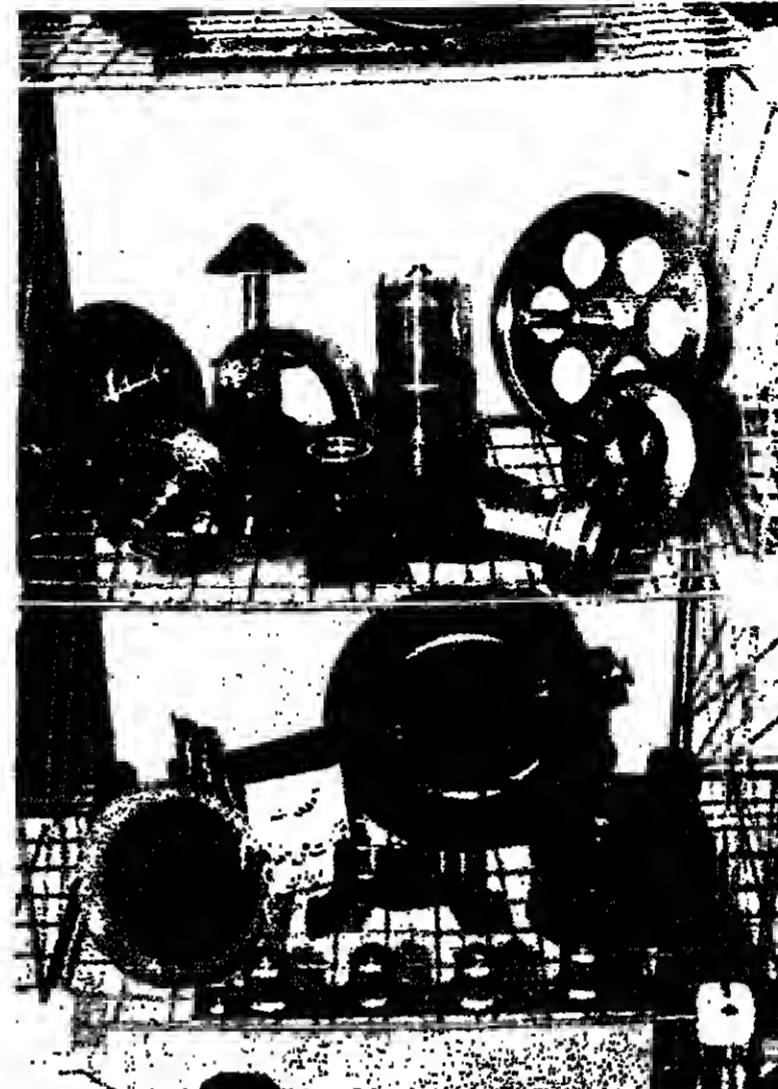
Q: Dr, what are some of the successful experiences that countries such as Germany, Japan and China have had?

A: "It is not true to say that Germany turned into one of the world's industrialized nations in a short time following her bitter defeat at the end of World War II.

"In fact Germany and Japan's reasons for success were their being able to correctly blend their defense industries plus their war-worn experiences with their national needs and their civil industries capabilities.

"I witnessed another example of defense and civil industries blending together in my visit to China. If she has been successful in development, it is mainly owed to her ability to implement a proper and planned management in the defense and civil industries and have all organizations and bureaux take advantage of this opportunity.

"The same thing happened in our country after the war and the oil industry seemed to be targeted by the enemy. That's why the job of manufacturing its sensitive and



Gun perforatings are sensitive and sophisticated parts used to make drillings faster and easier.

strategic spare parts was given to our complex.

"To further realize its importance we should know that one fifth of the oil revenue is spent on its drillings and import of spare parts," he added.

Motto Coming True

This question was put forward to the complex director.

Q: Is producing strategic industrial spare parts an economic, industrial and political move?

"No, it is more than that. Soon after we started manufacturing the strategic spare parts in our defense industries, we realized that not only the enemy's plans for disturbing our economic system was destroyed, but the Islamic Republic was recognized as one of the few manufacturers in this field and even started receiving orders.

Therefore our motto became a reality after years, and now just

like the rest of the country we are proud of it," he stressed.

Let's Give Domestic Industries A Chance

Q: Dr. Assemipoor, how do you view exports?

A: "Drilling is a stable industry and that's why procuring its spare parts is extremely important. For instance, the gun perforatings we are now producing in our complex and are considered strategic were used to be exclusively manufactured by three giant and reputable foreign companies which are now our very own customers.

"Drilling is a standardized and

sensitive industry. The safety ratio does not allow us to just use any spare part. Another important factor is that the very acceptance of the domestic spare parts by the drillers and drilling experts and workers who have used the foreign parts for 70 years is of more importance than receiving approvals from places such as 'ISO 9000', Dr. Assemipoor added.

Expansion of the Activities

Q: Are you capable of continuing this trend?

The complex director responded to this question.

A: "Fortunately, the nation's high ranking officials are paying special attention to industries and agriculture and this assists us in speeding up our work.

We are currently continuing our cooperation with several ministries, bureaux and organizations such as the oil, drilling, petro-

chemical, spare part samples were sent to Shahid Shah Abadi Industrial Complex and our friends started the designing and production. We have so far produced more than 800 types of spare parts in our complex.

"Shahid Shah Abadi and Sanam complexes are now certified and approved by the National Iranian Drilling Company.

"Importing spare parts faces another complication which is the customs barriers resulting in the stoppage of our work every once in a while.

"Other than just being able to manufacture the parts domestically is an assuring fact itself and our workers and technicians do not worry about the lack of spare parts any longer," he stressed.

Industries' Bureaucratic System, Need for Upheaval

Q: Speaking as the director of the complex, is there a need for a review of the industries' bureaucratic system?

A: "There certainly is, because they practically are not coordinated with the development which has started and is being shaped. That is a major obstacle for our managers to develop 'self-belief'. Yes, it is serious and must be removed," he demanded.

Why Domestic Products?

Q: Would you tell us why we should produce our own products domestically?

A: "Procuring our parts from foreign sources is easy and quality assuring while guaranteeing non-stop production, now why not import?"

"Giving a chance to our own



Ordinarily, the military standards' safety ratio is higher than the regular standards.

chemical and refining industries.

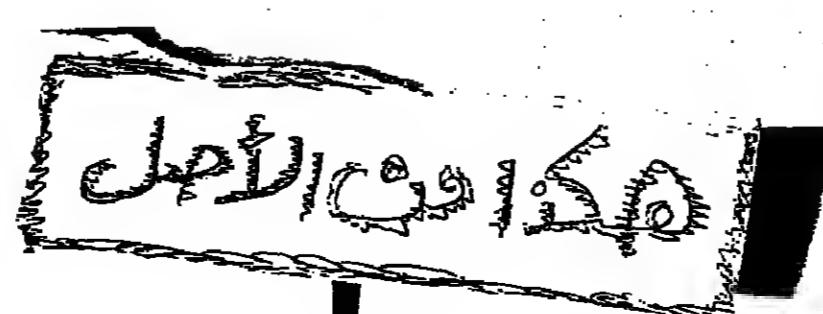
"I believe that the country's industrial managers' first priority is to create the self-belief and self-reliance spirit, which is not an easy task.

"We must trust our industrial capabilities in general and defense industries capabilities in particular specially after all these successful achievements," he added.

Shooting the First Guns

Q: Dr, would you tell us more about the gun perforatings?

A: "Before even the contract was signed and the money re-



Eye-Catching Subs

IRAN
PROMOTIONAL ITEM NEWS

in Producing Petroleum Industry's Vital Spare Parts

Shahid Shah Abadi Complex at the Heart of Industrialization with the Guns of Self-Belief

skilled manufacturers to match their products against foreign rivals and standards is a challenge they should not be deprived of," the complex director said.

Shahid Shah Abadi Complex in Global Competition

Q: Dr. Assemipoor, did you pay anything for the technology?

A: "No we didn't. At first foreign manufacturers seemed like invincible monsters to us which

We are proud of what has been accomplished at Shahid Shah Abadi Complex.

substituting them with even another foreign manufacturer like a European one, for instance, never crossed our minds, due to severe price increases, not to mention substituting it with a domestic one.

May the Strings of Dependency Be Cut

Q: Dr. Assemipoor, what are all other benefits when we cut the strings of dependency?

A: "Any devout Iranian Muslim feels proud when he sees the

distrust takes a lot of advantage in cooperating with us. But for the very same reason the prices are higher," he admitted.

Beyond the Borders

Q: Do you have any plans for offering your complex's services abroad?

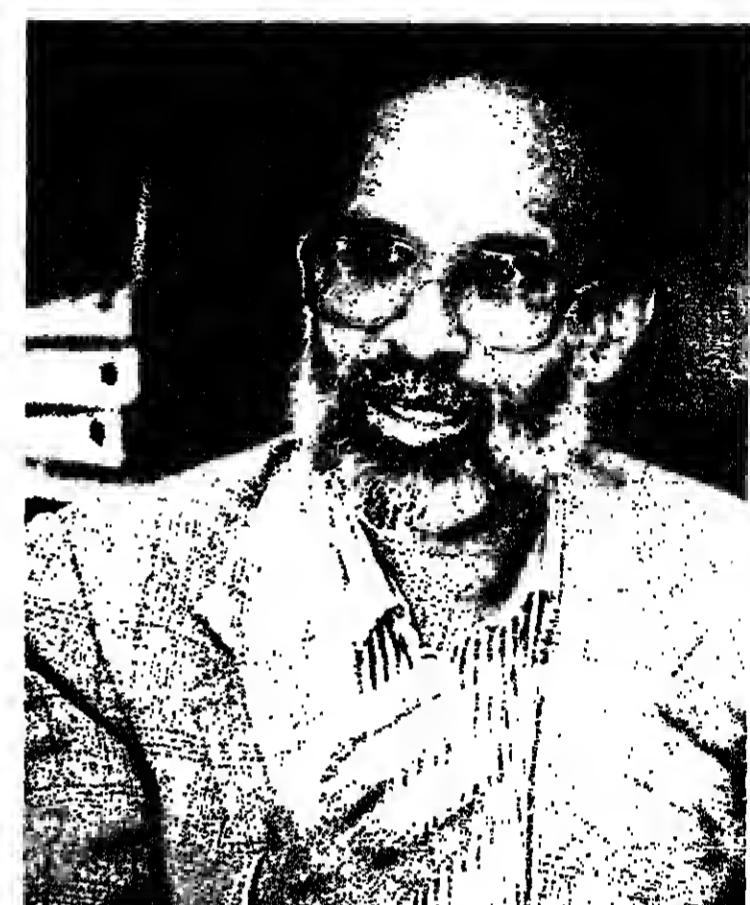
A: "Our priority is the procurement of the domestic industries demands. Once that's done, we'll go abroad," he emphasized.

Islamic Revolution and Self-Sufficiency

Q: What are your views on the Islamic Revolution's effects on self-belief?

A: "The world arrogance has always been and still is after the plundering of the societies' human, economic and cultural resources. Cultural plundering causes self-doubt, thus always leaning on the outsiders. Unfortunately, this way of thinking is somewhat widespread around the world.

"Fortunately, God blessed the Shias with this historically unique Revolution. Many of our enemies



Dr. Assemipoor, the National Iranian Drilling Company's managing director

The industries bureaucratic system is not coordinated with the development which has started and is being shaped.

"But then, we installed and tested the spare parts on the drilling masts after their approval by the drilling industry's laboratory.

"One of our experts who approved our parts is a man with 30 years of experience who was never a believer in domestic manufacturing," Dr. Assemipoor pointed out.

Quality and Standard

Q: While the quality of the products in your complex have been tested in practice, shouldn't they also be approved by let's say the Iranian Institute of Standard and Industrial Research?

A: "It is quite obvious that the safety ratio in defense industries is much more than civil industries. In defense industries, they always try to use the best quality raw materials to manufacture the highest quality products while being extremely accurate.

"The customers evaluate the merchandise too. But, for a third center to be present, I think there is a need for the creation of a new bureau within the Standard Institute under the name of, for instance, 'Deputy for Self-Sufficiency Standards' or etc... issuing the national standard approval," the director of Shahid Shah Abadi complex added.

strings of dependency cut and the culture of self-reliance prevailed.

"It was until recently, when our hard working oil-well drilling workers working in extreme heat ran out of gun perforating, they would be all frightened because of work stoppage.

"But now they are using our products, sending the gun perforating down the wells, you can see them shout in joy when they hear the explosions deep down under the ground. It is as if with every explosion one string of dependency had been cut," he stressed.

Superiorities of Military Standards

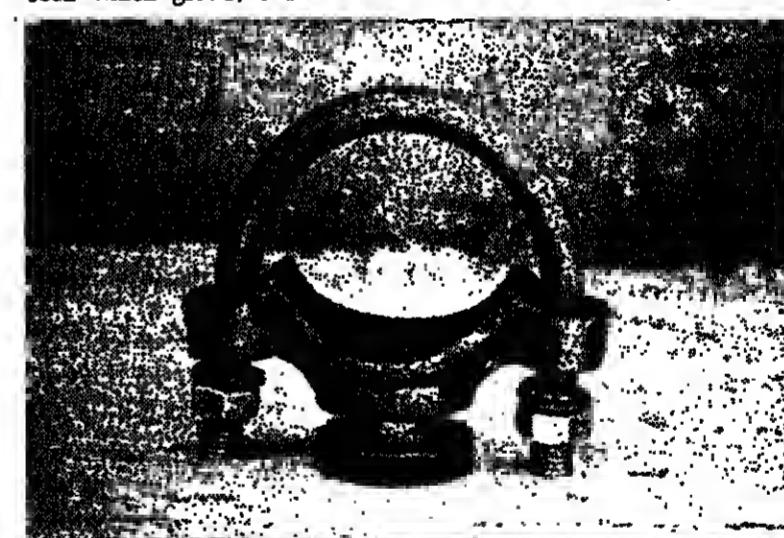
Q: Are the military standards special ones?

A: "As the director of Shahid Shah Abadi complex, I believe that military standards are more accredited and have a higher safety ratio, that's why the oil in-

Today, our drilling workers and foremen need not worry about delays in receiving spare parts.

considered our Divine Revolution a political one and fought it politically. Some others considered it an economic one and fought it economically.

"The fact is that the Islamic Revolution comes from a fertile seed which grows, bears fruits



and develops a strong trunk whenever it is spread," the complex director added.

Reverse Relationship, the Outcome of Cooperation

Q: Dr. you have held high posts in the defense industries during the eight-year war, what are the possibilities for the defense industries to manufacture the parts needed by the civil industries?

A: "A bridge was made between the two industries when civil industries started manufacturing the spare parts needed by the military sector during the war.

"Now, in peace time our relationship has reversed and the de-

fense industries are manufacturing the parts for the nation's civil industries.

"I dare to say that the defense industries and Shahid Shah Abadi Complex are capable of producing all the spare parts needed by the nation's industries, if the two

industries blend together creating blossoming and innovation, the doctor stressed.

Export of Services, Parts and Iran's Superiorities

Q: Dr. Assemipoor, what are your views on the export of drilling services, spare parts and equipment?

A: "The Islamic Republic of Iran has some export superiorities on services and parts. One of them is cheap labor. For instance,

the National Drilling Co. charges 15 million dollars for the whole process and the installation of the drilling mast. While only the labor cost with a foreign company is 6 million dollars," he said.

Shahid Shah Abadi Industrial Complex is now competing against the foreign rivals, without having paid anything for the technology.

Message to Our Fellow Countrymen

We conclude our report with a joint message issued by Messrs Assemipoor and the Director of Shahid Shah Abadi Complex.

The nation's industrial managers' first priority is the creation of the self-belief and self-reliance.

"With God's blessings and the will of our Imam Zanjan (12th Imam of the Prophet's Household), we have a rich country. Our people are intelligent. On materialistic resources, we are very rich.

"These spiritual and materialistic possibilities will reach their peak and our proud Muslim nation will gain triumph under the great leadership of the Ayatollah Khomeini and our late Imam's heavenly blessings," they concluded.

Largest Encyclopedia on the Life of Prophet (AS)

IRAN NEWS ART DESK

Dar al-Waseelah Publishing House in Mecca last week published a 12-volume encyclopedia in Arabic, said to be the largest in the world, on Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), an IRNA report from Athens said.

The 6000-page encyclopedia, which covers 360 subjects on the life and teachings of the Prophet, was prepared at a cost of over \$2 million, Saudi daily Arab News reported.

It was prepared by a group of 40 experts in hadith, Arabic language, jurisprudence and Islamic education during a period of seven years.

The encyclopedia was supervised by Sheikh Saleh ibn Abdullah ibn Humaid, imam and khatib (preacher) of the Haram Mosque in Mecca.

The work will be translated into Persian, Urdu, French, Turkish, English, Tagalog and Swahili languages.

Preparations are under way to display the encyclopedia's highlights on the Internet, in English, within the next few months.

The price of the encyclopedia will be in the range of \$100-130.

Stage

Production of 'Les Miserables' at Bahman Farhangsara

IRAN NEWS ART DESK

The stage production of Victor Hugo's 'Les Miserables' at the Bahman Farhangsara has been met with enthusiastic public reception and is to run through the end of the current Iranian year (March 20).

The production is directed by Behruz Gharibpoor who also adapted the novel to the play format.

Coconsidered as a new move in the Iranian theater, the production features 60 performers in 180 parts. Daily performances begin at 6 p.m.

According to the public relations department of the Bahman Farhangsara, the 8th session of the Theater Writers and Critics will focus on Behruz Gharibpoor's production of 'Les Miserables.'

The session, which is to be attended by a number of playwrights and theater critics including Gharibpoor, is scheduled to be held at the Drama Unit of the Art Bureau of the Islamic Propagation Organization (No. 4/1 Argentine Alley, Hafiz Street) at 4 p.m. on Saturday January 4.

Geology in the Mirror of Photographs

IRAN NEWS ART DESK

A photoexhibition, entitled 'Geology in the Mirror of Photographs,' will open at the House of Science of Andishe Farhangsara on Thursday January 2.

According to the public relations department of Andishe Farhangsara, the exhibition is a synthesis of the science of geology and the art of photography and will include images by Nader Esfandiari and Arash Sharifi.

The show will run through January 16, and visiting hours start at 9:00 a.m.

"Star Wars" Props, Spacecraft Coming to Major Museum

An exhibit, showcasing 250 original motion picture props, artwork, models and costumes, will open next November to mark the 20th anniversary of "Star Wars"

and Space Museum.

But curators of the Smithsonian Institution, which operates a score of U.S. government-sup-

Thursday it will open an exhibit next November to mark the 20th anniversary of "Star Wars," showcasing 250 original motion

good fantasy," said curator Mary Henderson, who is also writing a book about "Star Wars" as a popular American myth. "One major motive ... is to show 'Star Wars' as a compelling space flight fantasy."

Among the displays will be models of Han Solo's Millennium Falcon, imperial star destroyers and Luke's X-Wing fighter. Also look for life-size models of Chewbacca and C-3PO, Princess Leia's white robe dress from the original movie and her scant slave-girl costume from "Return of the Jedi."

Also included will be artwork used as scenery on the ice-planet of Hoth, early drawings of characters and scenes such as the bar on Luke's home planet, Obi-Wan Kenobi's light saber and other props, and a 30-minute documentary about the myth that captured America's imagination.

"Star Wars" is famous for the beauty and the rich detail of the models that were made for it," Henderson said. "One of the things 'Star Wars' did was create a whole new way of doing special effects. It looks a little primitive now, but back then it was something really special."

This is not the museum's first foray into Hollywood's version of space. The Air and Space Museum displayed props and costumes from "Star Trek" in a 1992 exhibit, which attracted nearly 900,000 visitors. For 11 months, visitors were already queued at opening time.

Curators had an idea how popular their planned "Star Wars" exhibit would be when they started setting up the preview display case

this week. Though workers were hidden by a six-foot partition, visitors stretched cameras over their heads to take pictures of the life-size model of C-3PO, the golden robot who accompanied Luke Skywalker around the galaxy.

"You can tell how popular it's going to be just by looking at the kids' faces when they see R2-D2," said Kim Riddle, spokeswoman for the museum. "They love it."

The showcase offers a sneak preview with life-size models of C-3PO, R2-D2 and an imperial storm trooper, and several paintings used in the filming.

Props and costumes have been stored in California and only a few items have been displayed in San Francisco and Japan.

The museum show, to open in November 1997, should add to what is expected to be a blaze of publicity for next year's anniversary of the original. In addition to the original three movies returning to the big screen next spring, expect Hollywood commercialization of everything from action figures to lunch boxes.

The re-released "Star Wars" trilogy will include previously discarded footage and buffed-up special effects and soundtracks. "Star Wars" hits theaters Jan. 31, followed by "The Empire Strikes Back" Feb. 21, and "Jedi" March 7.

"Star Wars" is the fourth-highest grossing film ever, with \$323 million in receipts, behind "E.T.," "Jurassic Park," and "Forrest Gump."

Antonioni Loses Awards in Burglary

ROME (AP) - Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni's Rome flat has been broken into and burglars have made off with the most prestigious awards he has received in his long cinema career, police said Saturday.

Items taken included the Oscar he received in 1995 for his lifetime's work, the Golden Lion from the Venice Film Festival awarded in 1983 for his career and the Golden Palm he won at the Cannes Film Festival with his 1967 film "Blow Up."

Investigators said the flat was burgled on December 25 or 26 while the director and his wife Emilia Fico were spending Christmas in the Venice region.

Fico on Saturday appealed to the thieves to return the trophies, saying the director had been particularly upset by their loss. "It's the history of his life," she told the Rome newspaper La Repubblica.

Tom Cruise Acts Stories for His Kids

NEW YORK (AP) - Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman are doing some extracurricular acting - for their kids' bedtime stories.

"Having two actors as your parents has some advantages - we play all the characters in their books," Cruise recently told a magazine in its January issue. "Little benefits, you know?"

However, 1-year-old Connor and 4-year-old Isabella "haven't seen any of our films," he said. "They're not allowed to really watch television. We read to them and they're allowed to watch educational videos."



Harrison Ford (C) in "Star Wars," the 1977 children's adventure film that started the trend for cartoon-style epic

cially significant - or flight-worthy - as the Apollo 11 space capsule in the Washington's most popular visitor attraction, the National Air and Space announced

ported museums, say it has earned its space by sparking Americans' imaginations.

Air and Space announced

picture props, artwork, models and costumes.

"The best way to get kids interested in space is to give them a

Reality-Based TV Shows Cause Controversy

"When Animals Attack," CBS

featuring black widow spiders, rattlesnakes and bears. National Geographic says its show will be less sensational.

"I would never want to scare people or to dwell on a number of small incidents and give people the impression that it's more dangerous out there than it really is," said Rosenfeld.

That's a concern of some people who monitor television's effect on children. The UCLA Center for Communication Policy called the trend of animal specials "Ominous."

One Fox telecast of "When Animals Attack" was the network's sixth-highest rated show of the week. An entire cable network devoted to animals, "Animal Planet," is in the works.

The shows appeal to people's fascination with the uncontrollable, said Michael Marsden, a pop culture expert.

"Close Call: Cheating Death," NBC

In response to Ohlmeyer's criticism, Fox officials pointed out that NBC promoted a "Dateline NBC" segment about someone being gored by a bull.

Both Fox and CBS have aired programs featuring blizzards, floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters. Fox called its program "When Disaster Strikes." CBS presented "Forces of Nature."

Another Fox special, "Close Call: Cheating Death," showed a skydiver filming his own terrifying fall as two parachutes malfunctioned.

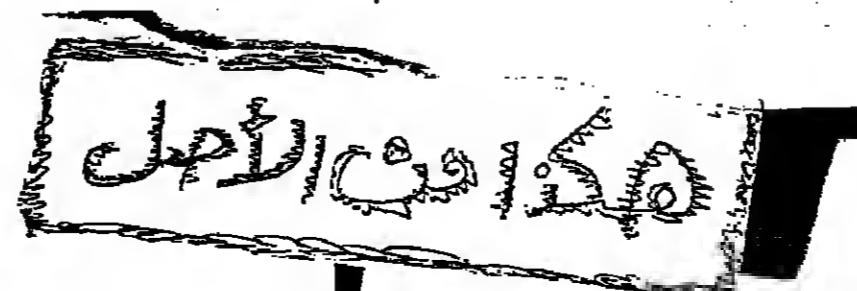
After the success of the movie, "Twister," the weather channel did brisk business selling video footage of storm fanatics chasing tornadoes.

Even the most venerable purveyor of nature programming, National Geographic, is getting into the act, preparing a documentary called "Deadly Encounters,"

"Inspired by Love," At Eshraq Farhangsara



"Inspired by Love," the feature film directed by Alireza Davudnezhad, is being screened at the Golbagh Hall of Eshraq Farhangsara. Daily screenings start at 3, 5 and 7 p.m. until Friday Jan. 10. "Inspired by Love" features Khosro Shakiba, Bahare Rahnama, Mohammad Reza Davudnezhad. Address: Jashnvar St., 2nd Tehranpars Sq.



IRAN

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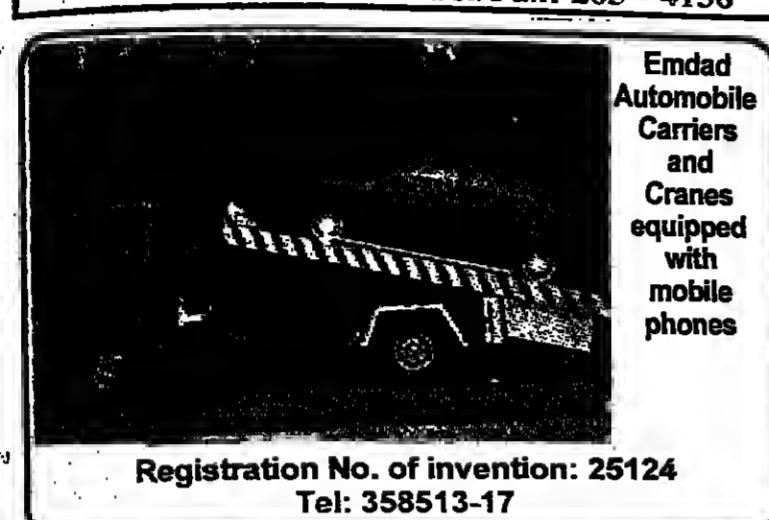
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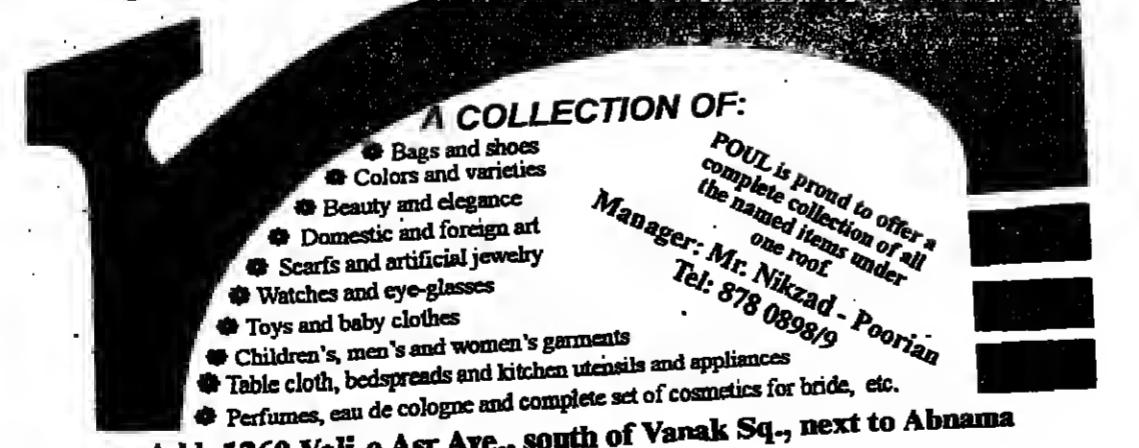
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I.D.I.C

Newcastle in Seventh Heaven

LONDON (AFP) - Newcastle stormed back into the Premiership title race with a remarkable 7-1 demolition of Tottenham at St. James' Park on Saturday.

England trio Alan Shearer, Les Ferdinand and Roh Lee claimed two goals each and Philippe Albert also found the net as Newcastle registered their first win in eight premiership games.

And despite their dreadful run of form, the Magpies are only five points behind leaders Liverpool going into the new year.

The rout sparked scenes of wild celebrations throughout Newcastle and assistant manager Terry McDermott beamed: "This might just kick-start our season."

And McDermott, standing in for Newcastle boss Kevin Keegan who rushed home to be with his flu-stricken wife, Jean, fired a warning to Newcastle's title rivals.

"We're certainly not out of the championship race and you right us off at your peril," he said.

"We know we are capable of putting on performances like that and if we can produce another against Leeds on New Year's Day we will be right back in the hunt."

Manchester United will enter the New Year in second place after beating arch rivals Leeds United courtesy of an eighth minute penalty from fans' favorite Eric Cantona.

Roared on by the Premiership's biggest crowd of the season at 55,256 spectators, United had the better of a dull match and go into 1997 on the back of three straight wins in which they have scored 10 goals and conceded none.

"Keeping clean sheets is the most important thing for me because defensive strength and consistency is what you build championship challenges on," said United boss Alex Ferguson.

Aston Villa came from behind to claim a point from a 2-2 draw at Highbury and deny Arsenal the chance to climb back on top of the Premiership.

The Gunners dominated the first period and jumped to the lead after Ian Wright's 12th minute strike, his 22nd goal of the season.

Robson Grounds Ronaldo for New Year's Eve

BARCELONA (AFP) - Barcelona coach Bobby Robson is not letting his Brazilian star striker Ronaldo return home for New Year's Eve as punishment for missing a training session here on Saturday morning.

Ronaldo, a hot contender for this year's FIFA player of the year award, was due back at training at 10:00 local time, after passing Christmas in his home country.

But international flight delays meant that Ronaldo only arrived back in time to join the team for the afternoon training session.

Englishman Robson decided to schedule the 20-year-old for a personal training session on December 31 as a disciplinary measure.

Ronaldo will be joined by fellow Brazilian Giovanni, who has been reprimanded for the same reasons.

According to Spanish press, Ronaldo was intending to return to Brazil until the Spanish League got underway again on January 4.

Only a week ago, Ronaldo opened fire on his coach Bobby Robson's methods in the local press, saying they had to change.

The 20-year-old sensation indi-

But Villa rallied in the second with back-in-favor Sava Milosevic equalizing in the 67th minute and Dwight Yorke producing an instant reply after Paul Merson restored Arsenal's lead six minutes later.

Aston Villa's Brian Little admitted his side were lucky to escape with a point after a dreadful first half.

"If we had been three or four down at half-time it would not have been an untrue reflection of the game," said Little.

Arsenal's French Manager Arsene Wenger tried to look on the bright side of two points dropped: "It was important not to lose and maybe we will look back and see this point as being very valuable but of course you are disappointed when you do not win at home."

Joe Kinnear celebrated his 50th birthday today by watching his fourth-placed Wimbledon side bounce back from Thursday's 5-0 midweek defeat at Villa that ended their 20-game unbeaten run.

Goals from Efan Ekoku, Oyvind Leonhardsen and Marcus Gayle secured a 3-1 victory against Everton at Goodison Park and Kinnear said: "I could not have wished for a better present than the result today."

"We have a couple of games in hand on Liverpool and we are still up there. It is not bad going for a little club."

Middlesbrough's troubled manager, Bryan Robson, dodged the post-match press conference after watching his side slump to a 3-0 defeat at struggling Coventry.

Middlesbrough have won just once in their last 15 Premiership outings and enter the New Year in crisis after picking up just 28 points in the whole of 1996.

A first half header from Darren Huckerby set the Sky Blues on the way before a second half spot-kick from Gary McAllister and a spectacular own goal by Craig Liddle capped another miserable day for Middlesbrough.

David Pleat watched his side salvage a point at Chelsea after fighting back from two goals down - but he had nothing but the



ALAN SHEARER

highest praise for Ruud Gullit's stylish Londoners.

Wednesday were taken apart in the first 20 minutes in an entertaining clash at Stamford Bridge and Pleat, who got stuck in the lift on his way down to pitch-side to reorganize his side, enthused: "I thought Chelsea were superb, the way they pass the ball and the way they move is splendid for the game."

"I thoroughly enjoyed being a manager today. Chelsea in those first 15 minutes nearly had me falling off the top of the stand."

But after Gianfranco Zola and

Mark Hughes had put Chelsea 2-0 ahead, Mark Penbridge pulled Wednesday back into the game with a stunning 30-yard volley before Dejan Stefanovic equalized in injury-time.

Chelsea boss Gullit, though, was upset at two points lost, fuming: "We gave them chances because we were sloppy, losing balls in midfield. That is stupid."

West Ham's nine-match winless streak finally came to an end as Croatian Slaven Bilic and Romanian Florin Raducioiu scored the goals in a 2-0 win over Sunderland.

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Bichel has taken 29 wickets at 17.48 and gets his opportunity at top level after a strong display against West Indies for an Australian XI in Hobart last month.

Bichel replaces Jason Gillespie of South Australia, who strained muscles in his left side while bowling in the first innings of the third test, won by six wickets by the West Indies on Saturday. Gillespie could be out for up to six weeks.

Selectors relegated batsmen Matthew Hayden and Justin Langer for the limited-over match, while there was no room for Ricky Ponting, who was dropped from the third test, making way for Langer at number three in the batting.

Jaguars Bring Down Bills

BUFFALO, NEW YORK (AFP) - The Jacksonville Jaguars won the first National Football League playoff game in their two-year history on Saturday, over perennial postseason contenders Buffalo.

Natrone Means rushed for 175 yards and Mike Hollis kicked three field goals, including the game-winning 45-yarder with three minutes left, to lift the Jaguars to a 30-27 victory over the Bills.

It was the Bills' first playoff loss at Rich Stadium, where they had won nine postseason games.

Hollis needed the help of a friendly bounce off the right upright on the winning kick. The ball caromed off the top of the post but still went through.

Jacksonville will play either Denver or New England in the second round of the American Conference playoffs next weekend.

It appeared the veteran Bills, who were making their eighth playoff appearance in nine years, were headed to victory when cornerback Jeff Burris intercepted a tipped pass and returned it 38 yards for a touchdown 43 seconds into the fourth quarter to snap a 20-20 tie.

But the Jaguars responded to the playoff pressure with a 10-play, 65-yard scoring drive, capped by a two-yard touchdown pass from Mark Brunell to Jimmy Smith, to tie the game at 27-27 with just under nine minutes left in the game.

Brunell, who completed 15-of-33 passes for 239 yards with two interceptions, hit Keenan



DALLAS OWNER JERRY JONES
Cowboys Embarrass Vikings 40-15

DALLAS, TEXAS (AFP) - The Dallas Cowboys, who have struggled all season, finally had things fall their way on Saturday in a 40-15 National Football League playoff victory over Minnesota.

George Teague forced two fumbles, one of which prevented a touchdown, and returned an interception 29 yards for a score as the reigning Super Bowl champions embarrassed the Vikings 40-15 in a National Conference wildcard game.

Troy Aikman, Emmitt Smith, Michael Irvin and Deion Sanders all had big games for the Cowboys, who were relegated to the wildcard round, for the first time since 1991.

With quarterback Brad Johnson making his first career playoff start, the Vikings committed four turnovers and allowed 268 yards in the first half, falling behind 30-0.

The Cowboys next will face the Carolina Panthers, the NFC West champions but a second-year team that will be playing the first postseason game in franchise history. Dallas has reached the NFC championship game four straight years, winning the Super Bowl three times during that span.



MICHAEL IRVIN



cated to journalists that he was much more at ease playing under the guidance of the Brazilian national coach Mario Zagalo.

At the time of the attack, Ronaldo, who was a member of the Brazilian world cup winning squad in 1994, had not scored a goal in over a month in Spanish League. In 1994/95 he created a sensation in the Dutch Football

League when he scored 30 goals in the season for PSV Eindhoven

Robson, a former England coach who took charge in the summer, has come in for increasing criticism from disgruntled fans with Barca third in the table after losing to Real Madrid three weeks ago, a defeat which left their bitter rivals four points clear of the Catalan giants.

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Ronaldo was intending to return to Brazil until the Spanish League got underway again on January 4.

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